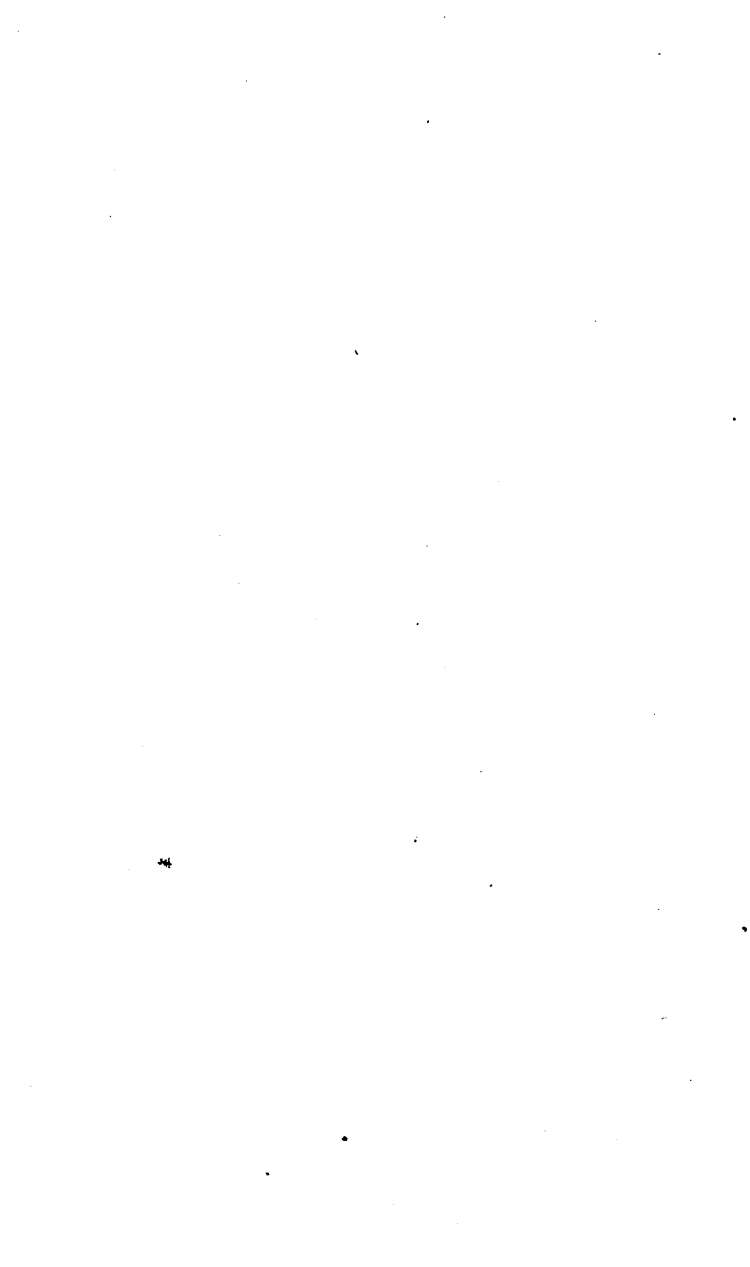


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ST. PAUL ON TRIAL



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*A NEW READING OF THE HISTORY
IN THE BOOK OF ACTS AND
THE PAULINE EPISTLES*

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BY

J. IRONSIDE STILL, M.A., D.D.

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PREFACE

I HAVE to acknowledge the help rendered by three friends in reading the proofs and making valuable corrections and suggestions: the Rev. Principal John Skinner, D.D., Cambridge; the Rev. William Skinner, D.D., late of Madras Christian College, India; and the Rev. John A. Selbie, D.D., Aberdeen. My son, the Rev. Sydney C. Still, M.A., Kilcreggan, has also assisted me in preparing this book. But none of these, I imagine, would wish to be held committed to the views I have ventured to set forth.

I am grateful to the *Student Christian Movement* for acting as Publishers, for the book was written for students everywhere, and is humbly offered in the hope that it will quicken interest and strengthen faith.

J. IRONSIDE STILL.

*Banchory-Devenick,
Aberdeen,
July 1923.*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

IN the following pages there is nothing that the ordinary reader, however technically un-equipped, may not easily understand. The findings of scholarship have been present to the writer's mind, although no express reference is made to scholars. Not only would this volume have been greatly increased, but also the discussions would have been complicated beyond what the ordinary reader could endure, if note had been taken of many conflicting interpretations and conclusions that would have led to controversy. The present writer, in his interpretation of New Testament History, bases on a fact hitherto overlooked by scholarship—a fundamental fact determining the character of the history in Acts. Any controversy must be on whether it is a fact. If the fact is granted, the arena of debate is so far shifted as to make much of the old controversy obsolete. This fundamental fact is that the book of Acts is not primarily a history of the earliest Christian Church but a statement of particular facts of that history written in preparation for the defence of the Apostle

Paul in his trial before a Roman Court; so that not only the date of writing can be accurately determined as occurring before the trial should take place, but also the limits the author set to his history of events can be appreciated—both the events he makes much of, and those he either passes over lightly or makes no reference to at all.

The following chapters have been put together more to stimulate the minds of thoughtful readers than to make any pretence of having fully discussed the whole question. To the present writer it came as a discovery, which he had not observed in any previous writer on the subject, that the author of Acts had a plan of his own, explicitly advertized by himself and steadily adhered to throughout. It may be indicated in modern fashion under a variety of headings, other than those he has tentatively suggested; but that the plan is there, without possibility of doubt or cavil, must be granted the moment it is apprehended.

The next thing to ascertain is what this plan implies. The present writer thinks that, whatever opinions may be held as far as the first two-thirds of the book are concerned, there can be no doubt about the last third (the final section, *one of eight*). This long section explains why Paul was arrested and what happened to him at the Court of the Roman governor of Judæa *before his appeal to Cæsar, and after* till his case was settled in

Rome. Fancy may explain this in many ways, but faithfulness to literary truth demands that we acknowledge this section as written to make the Jewish conspiracy against Paul's life clear to the Roman mind as the sole cause of his arrest, although the charges against him and the gospel he preached were framed by the Jews afterwards when they had to divert Roman censure from themselves. We say this here, before the reader enters upon the argument, in order to keep in his mind, while he reads the first sections and is inclined to think that they were written for the sole purpose of explaining Gentile Christianity to the world, that this last section will cause him to alter his opinion by showing the author's purpose to have been a much narrower one than that, viz. to defend Paul. Of course, the defence of Paul involved the defence of Christianity, but the book aims at more in particular. The whole story is seen to be planned, with great care and with consummate skill, for one definite end.

A further step follows. If the book is planned for a purpose so particular, then we shall have to open our minds to the fact that Acts omits a very great deal of the early Church history; that in truth its omissions vastly exceed its inclusions; and especially that historical facts to be gathered from other New Testament writings may find places in the contemporary history regardless of

what Acts does *not* say. In other words, events may have taken place without Acts making the slightest reference to them in its account of what took place in the same place and at the same time. This will greatly alter our conception of the earliest Church history in some important respects.

The subject is discussed, after this introductory chapter, in the following order :—

II. First is given a conspectus of the Plan of Acts, showing the author's section-endings.

III. There follows a discussion of its meaning, a paper read partly to the Society for the Study of the New Testament at Aberdeen, and partly to the Aberdeenshire Theological Club. This is but an epitome of what was originally prepared, being deemed sufficient for the purpose and not so likely to tax the patience of the reader as a full discussion might have been.

IV. Following this is an argument that such a statement as Acts would, to Paul and his friends at Cæsarea, seem necessary when Paul contemplated an appeal to Cæsar.

V. The question, Who was Theophilus, to whom a copy of Luke's Gospel was presented and for whom his Acts was prepared? is next considered, and a practical use for him suggested.

VI. Thereafter is placed a "popular" discussion regarding some of the consequences that follow the acceptance of the theory that Acts was planned and written for Paul's trial.

VII. Finally, the writer has been bold enough to show how he thinks the course of Church history during the first thirty-three years may be discerned, *not* by assuming that Acts, or the other New Testament writings dealing with the same time have erred in historical allusions, but rather by conceiving that interpreters have erred, one generation leading the next farther astray, because they have overlooked a fact so vital to interpretation as that Acts, the one Church history we possess concerning New Testament times, scrupulously accurate as it is, was planned and executed for one definite purpose, much narrower than the history of the Christian Church, although it is true Church history as far as it goes; and that it was so planned and written at one time and before a fixed date. When this date is fixed as early as Paul's imprisonment it becomes impossible to trifle with interpretations that deny this date, and possible to read the other Scriptures of the time as contemporary aids to a fuller understanding without misgiving.

VIII. As an appendix there is placed a discussion on the last five or six years of Paul's life.

When one has accustomed one's self to the view of early Church history suggested by Acts, as much by its studied omissions as by its careful statements, adjusting one's mind to the chronology of that history, and compelling one's self to think what Paul

must have been doing during the long years of his captivity (on which the book is almost silent), one may be regarded without impropriety as prepared to suggest new solutions of vexed questions—solutions that will not challenge the genuineness of some of the most precious Scriptures on which the faith and life of the Christian Church is nurtured.

CHAPTER II

THE PLAN OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

PART FIRST—BEGINNINGS

(IN JEWISH CHRISTIAN CHURCH)

SECTION I.—BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP.—i. 1—ii. 47).

Introduction (Address to Theophilus; connection with Luke's Gospel story; the Eleven preparing, by prayer and Scripture study, to witness to the Resurrection; Judas' place filled).—i. 1-26.

(1) *The Faith* (Outpouring of Spirit at Pentecost; Peter's "First Sermon," proving from Scripture that Jesus is the Jews' Messiah—the Christ; many believers baptized into this Name).—ii. 1-41.

(2) *The Fellowship* (Believers follow practice of other Sects).—ii. 42-46.

Section Ending—"And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved."—ii. 47.

SECTION II.—BEGINNING OF OFFICIAL OPPOSITION TO THE FAITH AND OF ORGANIZATION OF THE FELLOWSHIP.—
iii. 1—v. 16.

- (1) *The Faith* (Cripple healed, and Peter's "Second Sermon"; first Interference of Sanhedrin, forbidding the Faith; but believers signally encouraged to adhere to it).—iii. 1—iv. 31.
- (2) *The Fellowship* (Common brotherhood organized; Deceitfulness in the fellowship punished—Ananias and Sapphira).—iv. 32—v. 13.

Section Ending—"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes of men and women, insomuch that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that as Peter came by, at the least his shadow might overshadow some of them. And there also came together the multitude from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folk and them that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one."—v. 14-16.

SECTION III.—BEGINNING OF OFFICIAL TOLERATION OF THE FAITH, AND OF DISSENSION IN THE FELLOWSHIP.—
v. 17—vi. 7.

- (1) *The Faith* (Second Interference of the Sanhedrin, which, however, on Gama-

liel's motion, refrains from extreme measures and practically tolerates the Faith).—v. 17-42.

- (2) *The Fellowship* (Dispute about Widows' grants between Hebrews and Grecians, and Election of the Seven).—vi. 1-6.

Section Ending—"And the Word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."
—vi. 7.

SECTION IV.—BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIAN DIFFERENCES, OR DIVERGENCES, FROM JEWISH CHURCH PRACTICE IN JERUSALEM.—vi. 8—ix. 31.

- (1) *Beginning of Difference as to the Temple and Mosaic Law* (Stephen's appeal to Scripture for justification of his position and claim; his death and the expulsion of his disciples from Jerusalem—the Apostles, and of course their followers, not being molested).—vi. 8—viii. 4.
- (2) *Beginning of Difference as to Fellowship with Circumcised Outcasts* (Philip receiving Samaritans and Eunuch into fellowship; his action, as far as Samaritans are concerned, being approved by Apostles and Church in Jerusalem).—viii. 5-40.

- (3) *Beginning of Difference in Preaching* (Saul of Tarsus converted; his preaching at first acceptable, but after a time unacceptable, wherefore his life in danger in Damascus and Jerusalem).—ix. 1-30.

Section Ending—"So the Church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied."—ix. 31.

SECTION V.—BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIAN DIFFERENCES, OR DIVERGENCES, FROM JEWISH CHURCH PRACTICE—*continued*. ix. 32—xii. 24).

- (4) *Beginning of Difference as to Fellowship with Uncircumcised Gentiles* (Peter receives Gentiles into fellowship at Cæsarea and the Christian Church in Jerusalem, after challenging his action, acquiesces in it; Barnabas, deputy of the same Jewish Church, approves of and encourages Gentile fellowship at Antioch; Saul of Tarsus called in to assist in the work there).—ix. 32—xi. 30.
- (5) *Difference in Jewish Christian Church caused by Herod* (Herod's persecution; Apostles driven from Jerusalem; Peter, escaping from prison, goes to "another

place"; Herod's tragic death).—xii. 1-23.

Section Ending—"But the Word of God grew and multiplied."—xii. 24.

PART SECOND—CONSEQUENCES

(IN GENTILE CHRISTIAN CHURCH)

SECTION VI.—PAUL, FOR EVANGELIZING GENTILES, OPPOSED BY RIOTS; BUT JUSTIFIED BY A DECISION OF THE JEWISH CHRISTIAN CHURCH COUNCIL IN JERUSALEM.—xii. 25—xvi. 5.

Introduction (Church of Syrian Antioch sends forth Barnabas and Saul on Mission to Gentiles; Saul now introduced as Paul; winning of Proconsul of Cyprus; Paul's method of evangelizing Jews and Gentiles in synagogues).—xii. 25—xiii. 47.

- (1) *Opposition by Riot* (Paul and Barnabas driven by riot from Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra; undisturbed stay at Derbe; return journey, "confirming the Churches," and report at Syrian Antioch).—xiii. 48—xiv. 28.
- (2) *Decision favourable to Paul by Jerusalem Council* (Controversy about circumcision, question referred to Jerusalem Church; fellowship with uncircumcised not forbidden, but certain Gentile

practices forbidden in the fellowship; this decree delivered to Gentile Christians in Syria-Cilicia and Galatia). —xv. 1—xvi. 4.

- [(3) Example of Paul's manner in addressing an unevangelized mob—at Lystra.—xiv. 8—18.]

Section Ending—"So the Churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily."—xvi. 5.

SECTION VII.—PAUL, FOR EVANGELIZING GENTILES, OPPOSED BY ACTIONS AT LAW; BUT JUSTIFIED BY A DECISION OF A ROMAN PROCONSUL.—xvi. 6—xix. 20.

- (1) *Opposition by legal action* (At Philippi charge of proselytizing Romans, etc.; at Thessalonica, charge of treasonable preaching, etc.; at Corinth, charge of propagating a new religion).—xvi. 6—xviii. 13.

- (2) *Decision favourable to Paul by Gallio* (Gallio drives Paul's accusers from his court; they resort to riot in vain; Paul has peace from disturbance in Corinth and Ephesus for some years). —xviii. 14—xix. 19.

- [(3) Example of Paul's manner in addressing a purely pagan assembly—at Athens.—xvii. 16—34.]

Section Ending—"So mightily grew the Word of the Lord and prevailed."—xix. 20.

SECTION VIII A.—PAUL, FOR EVANGELIZING GENTILES, OPPOSED BY ATTEMPTS ON HIS LIFE; AND, HAVING BEEN ARRESTED AND ARRAIGNED, NOW AWAITS DECISION OF FELIX.—xix. 21—xxiv. 23).

I. *Attempts on Paul's life*—

- (1) Uproar at Ephesus, Paul kept safe by intervention of Asiarchs, friends of Cæsar.—xix. 21–41.
- (2) Plot to kill him at sea frustrated by change of route.—xx. 1–3.
- (3) Danger-haunted voyage to Jerusalem, amid tears and entreaties of anxious friends.—xx. 4–xxi. 17.
- (4) Attack on his life in the Temple; he is rescued by Chief-Captain, and is permitted to address the crowd and then the Jewish Sanhedrin.—xxi. 18–xxiii. 11.
- (5) Plot to kill Paul while yet in custody of chief-captain; he is sent to Felix at Cæsarea for safety.—xxiii. 12–35.

2. *Paul arraigned before Felix and awaiting his Decision*.—xxiv. 1–23.

SECTION VIII. B.—HOW PAUL CAME TO APPEAL TO CÆSAR, AND WHAT FAVOURABLE THINGS CAN BE TOLD OF HIM SINCE THEN.—xxiv. 24—xxviii. 31.

- (1) *Paul's appeal to Cæsar* (Felix fails to hear Paul's case again; after “two

years " his successor, Festus, proposes to send Paul for trial by Jewish Court, the Jews plotting to murder him on the way; whereupon Paul appeals).—xxiv. 24—xxv. 12.

- (2) *Three favourable Pictures of the Appellant* (a. Agrippa believes him guiltless—xxv. 13—xxvi. 32; b. his conduct on the voyage speaks loudly for him—xxvii. 1—xxviii. 16; and c. the leading Jews in Rome can bear witness to his conduct there).—xxviii. 17-28.
- (3) *Having waited "two years" uncondemned, Paul is entitled to be set free.*—xxviii. 30, 31.

The parallelism of the *two Parts* of Acts is intentional, each beginning with an *introduction* before the special history of the part is entered upon.

Notice should next be taken of the arrangement of the contents of each section.

The first three are perfectly balanced; first *the Faith* and second *the Fellowship*. But after this the Faith ceases to be dealt with, and all the rest of the book has to do with the Fellowship, namely, with the reception by the Christian Church of persons unfitted ceremonially for reception into the Jewish Church of Jerusalem. The story of Herod's persecution would seem an exception, being a persecution of the Faith, a kind of appendix to the fifth section which closes the first part of the book. It will be noted afterwards.

Sections IV and V are concerned with the beginnings of *Christian divergence in religious practice from the Jerusalem practice*; and they follow in order of time as well as of significance from *the less to the greater*.

Sections VI and VII will be seen to be also balanced in structure, the one showing how Paul was opposed by *riots*, the other by *actions at law*; and each concludes with the decision of an authoritative body which quelled the opposition—the particular form of it described in the section. Note also that there is introduced into both sections an example of Paul's manner of addressing a purely heathen audience. The two sections are balanced throughout.

The last section occupies itself at great length with opposition to Paul by *attempts on his life*, and contains several speeches of the Apostle in self-defence; but there is lacking here any decision of an authoritative nature leading to the cessation of the attempts. It is rather designed to indicate what that decision should be; but, till the very last sentence, the issue is not learned.

The section-endings have often been noticed by scholars, but no more than noticed. The reason for them has not, so far as we know, been inquired into. Nevertheless the sections thus marked off will be seen *prima facie* to justify these marks of division; and the object of the present writer is to study the plan and its significance. For there can be

no question that there is a definite plan here. But what is the purpose of the plan? What does a study of how it is carried out lead one to conclude? And how does this affect our interpretation of its history? These are questions that the writer attempts to answer in what follows.

CHAPTER III

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLAN

WE shall endeavour to show that the Plan of Acts is explicit in the current of the history and that its Purpose is implicit in the plan.

Scholarship seems never to have noticed that the author's plan is expressly indicated by himself. Very likely early Christians, being familiar with his way of showing his plan, not only perceived it at once, but also understood the limited scope of his history. But the scholarship of recent centuries, in overlooking this plan and formulating various competitive plans of its own, has probably so erred *a limine* as to have caused its own confusion. To say this of the noble army of New Testament scholars does seem (as a friend suggests) to play the part of *Athanasius, contra mundum*. But a child may find under the hedge a lantern which grown men, groping in the gloom, had never noticed, for that they had grown so tall! Nevertheless forget the child and look at the lantern. It carries a lamp within it, and when the dust of neglect is removed it shines with a clear light.

We say this in order to ask the reader of the

present discussion not to cite the accepted conclusions of scholarship against conclusions necessarily springing from a fundamental fact that scholarship has overlooked. First see if it is a fact; and if it is found to be so, then conclusions hitherto prevailing must be adjusted to it before they can be put in the scales against conclusions that it demands. Accordingly this discussion will proceed as if other views of the plan and purpose of the book of Acts had never been formulated, and as if we and our readers had nothing but, say, the Revised English Version of the Scriptures in our hands. The author's plan and the historical contents of his book are, for the moment, our only study.

THE PLAN

What is the expressed evidence of the author's own plan, his explicit disclosure of the limits he set to his writing?

There occur in Acts seven arresting sentences, which have a strong family likeness, and which for the reader's convenience are here set down, prefaced by the number of the section they seem to mark off.

I. (ii. 47.) "And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved."

II. (v. 14-16.) "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes of men and women—insomuch that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid

them on beds and couches that, as Peter came by, at least his shadow might overshadow some of them. And there also came together the multitude from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folk and them that were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed every one."

III. (vi. 7.) "And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

IV. (ix. 31.) "So the Church throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied."

V. (xii. 24.) "But the word of God grew and multiplied."

VI. (xvi. 5.) "So the Churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily."

VII. (xix. 20.) "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed."

VIII. (xxviii. 31) is the end of the book.

Three of these section-endings, II, III and IV, are longer than the rest; but it is to be observed that they all have one characteristic in common. Each makes a note of growth, increase, or multiplication—of the Church or of the Word. When we inquire whether they may not be used to mark off sections in the history, we find that *in every case* the

increase or growth, of which the reader will expect to be told the story, is hereby excused from being further narrated because the author is proceeding to a new phase or development of his history. More striking is the fact that each section thus marked off is found to be logically and topically complete in itself. Most striking of all is the fact that, as these pause-signals occur one after another, the author is seen to be imposing upon himself very strict limits in the choice of events to be narrated.

Looking at the three longest of these pause-signals we note that, besides the common formula, they have additions. In the longest one of all, closing Section II, the author, after using the formula, adds a passing reference to Peter's extraordinary power and the people's trust in his shadow,¹ also to the crowds that came into Jerusalem from adjacent places to share in the general wonder and benefit, as if he would have liked to narrate these things, but must be content with just this much in passing.

Then again in the pause-sentence at the end of Section III, he names the city (Jerusalem), and at the end of Section IV the district (Judæa, Samaria and Galilee) where

¹ Section VII closes, *before* the pause formula, with a similar reference to Paul's extraordinary power and the people's belief in the touch of his clothes. This is but one of many instances in Acts of the author's studied care to keep the balance even between the two great leaders of the Early Church (xix. 11 ff.).

the Church continued spreading. As to the former of these, he has in the first three short sections told how the Christian Faith and Fellowship began in Jerusalem, and now by the pause-sentence (Sect. III), he intimates that he is not to pursue the story of the Christian Church in that city any farther, but will just say this much, that, notwithstanding the Stephen persecution which he is about to relate, it did continue to grow "exceedingly" and (presumably in the thirty years covered by the book) many of the priestly class joined the fellowship. Whereupon, after the story of Stephen, not a scrap of the history of the Christian Church in Jerusalem is offered in the book of Acts; and it is only on the few occasions when stories of the Church outside Jerusalem require references to the Mother Church that we learn that a living, active Christian Church still continues in the city of its birth.¹ Plainly a continuous history of the early Christian Church is not what Luke proposes to write. The fortunes of even the Jewish Christian Church in Jerusalem do not concern him in this history. He has done with it. The reader will please take note of this remarkable fact, in view of a question to arise presently in our discussion.

The pause-sentence of Section IV in like manner intimates that the early Christian history of Palestine, concerning which one like Theophilus will want information, is

¹ The Herod persecution is hardly an exception.

beyond the limits of the author's undertaking. He has related in this section certain events occurring in Judæa and Samaria, but none in Galilee; and now he intimates that, as he did not continue the Jerusalem story, so now neither will he pursue the Palestine story, except to say that "throughout *all* Judæa and Galilee and Samaria" the Church did spread. The reader is therefore to think of a vast Christian movement here passed over. Thus we have another proof that our author is writing a very circumscribed, though circumstantial, bit of Christian history.

In all the other section-endings there is simply a note of general progress, without reference to place or province. But in each case the author's intimation is the same: "I shall not pursue this particular story farther, and now turn to another." Which he does. He has a goal in view, a climax for which the sections are preparing. We shall find it in the very significant last section of the book.

These pause-formulæ have one clear use at least. They cover lacunæ in the narrative—the passing over of more or less important history which is not demanded for the object in writing; also a lapse of time. What the omissions are will call for attention later. Meanwhile it may be observed in passing that there are one or two sentences in Acts with a suggestion of the pause-formula, which are however of too slight

arrestive force to be reckoned section-endings, and which stand for slight lacunæ, of time and of history, in the particular narratives in hand (*e.g.* xi. 21, 24).

When we view the contents of the sections thus cut off, and ask if this pause-formula may mean nothing more than a lacuna in the story, we find that the sections, one by one, present a procession of historical pictures or sets of pictures, distinct and significant, but with a peculiar *nexus* of interest which, when they are placed side by side, binds them together as one significant story, so skilfully put together that one hardly realizes that it covers thirty years. Let us briefly review the sections, taking care particularly to observe the section-endings and the outstanding histories distinguishable from incidental stories, so as to note the connected historical narrative running from beginning to end of the book. The track of this current we have tried to indicate by the headings or titles given to the sections.

Acts has long been recognized as consisting of two main parts. Part First is a book of beginnings, a characteristic that has mistakenly been applied to the whole book. Part Second, however, is rather a book of consequences. The whole book in its two parts is a book of *Beginnings and their Consequences*; not all their consequences by any means, but certain consequences affecting

especially one person. And the part dealing with these consequences is nearly twice as long as the part dealing with those beginnings.

PART FIRST, consisting of the first five sections, narrates a series of Beginnings in Christian history, section by section, in order as follows :—

Section I. Beginning of the Christian Faith, and concurrently of the Christian Fellowship.—i. 1—ii. 47.

Section II. Beginning of Jewish Official Opposition to the Faith, and concurrently of the Social Organisation of the Fellowship.—iii. 1—v. 16.

Section III. Beginning of Official Toleration of the Faith, and concurrently of Dissension in the Fellowship.—v. 17—vi. 7.

From this point onwards there is no further provision in the plan for discussing the Faith, the reason evidently being that there was no later dispute, or difference, as to that. All Christians agreed in believing in Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah of the Jews. But there was, and continued to be, difference as to the Fellowship, a cleavage of which that first dissension, the dispute between Hebrew and Grecian Christians as to widows' grants, was the forerunner.—vi. 1 f.

Sections IV and V. Beginnings of certain Differences, or Divergences, from Jewish Church practice.—vi. 8—ix. 31; ix. 32—xii. 24.

IV. (1) Beginning of Difference as to

Temple and Law : Stephen's movement and martyrdom.—vi. 8—viii. 4.

(2) Beginning of Difference as to Fellowship with circumcised outcasts from Jewish Fellowship : Philip's work in evangelizing Samaritans and the eunuch.—viii. 5-40.

(3) Beginning of Difference in Preaching : a beginning that nearly cost Saul of Tarsus his life in Damascus and menaced it in Jerusalem.—ix. 1-30.

V. (4) Beginning of Difference as to Fellowship with Uncircumcised Gentiles : the stories of Peter's fellowship with Cornelius and his friends in Cæsarea, and Barnabas' fellowship with Gentiles at Antioch.—ix. 32—xi. 30.

(5) Difference caused by Herod's Persecution. This however seems a kind of appendix to the section, or to Part First of the book. It is an account of both a beginning and an ending—a beginning of difference not in Christian practice but in Jewish Christian experience.—xii. 1-23.

PART SECOND, consisting of the closing three sections of the book, narrates not beginnings but rather endings, consequences of those four practices differing from the practice of the Jewish Church in Jerusalem which have been described in their beginnings in Sections IV and V, consequences affecting the work and person of one man in particular, that is Paul, who is now for the first time introduced to the reader by name.

Section VI. (1) Paul, for evangelizing Gentiles, Opposed by *Riots*; and (2) The Settlement of the Circumcision Question by the Christian Council of Jerusalem.—xii. 25—xvi. 5.

Section VII. (1) Paul, for evangelizing Gentiles, Opposed by *Actions at Law*; and (2) The Settlement of the Legal Question by the Proconsul Gallio at Corinth and the immediate result thereof.—xvi. 6—xix. 20.

Into each of these two sections, balanced in form as they are, there is introduced a sample of Paul's mode of addressing pure pagans, that is, people untouched by the synagogue worship of the Jews—one in VI, at Lystra, xiv. 8—18; and the other in VII, at Athens.—xvii. 16—34.

Section VIII. (1) Paul, for evangelizing Gentiles, Opposed by *Attempts on his Life*, which lead to his arrest; and (2) his arraignment before the Roman Court at Cæsarea, followed by his Appeal, voyage to Rome, and two years' waiting there for the Settlement of his case.—xix. 21—xxviii. 31.

Thus the whole book is planned carefully and systematically throughout. The section-endings have proved explicit pointers to the author's own plan, which is found to be coherent, consistent, congruous, in presenting a continuous current of connected history. If the plan now submitted be acknowledged to be a fair presentation of the facts with respect to this main current of the outstanding history,

there would seem to be no occasion to argue whether the author consciously and of set purpose devised it. There can surely be none to contend that such a plan is fortuitous and therefore of no consequence to the reader. But the question, "What is the significance?" brings us to the second proposition of our thesis.

THE PURPOSE

What is the purpose of this plan? How can it be accounted for, and what, in accounting for it, must we conclude as to the author's object in writing? To answer, we shall have to review the contents of these sections, looking for some clue that will explain the choice of plan, and knowing also that this explanation must also account not only for the events selected for narration but also for the manner of their presentation, for the greater emphasis given to some than to others, for the omission of many known to us as having occurred within the periods covered by the sections as well as of far more unknown to us, and for many other characteristic features of the book.

The theory to which we are compelled, after prolonged study from many points of view, is that the immediate occasion of the writing of Acts was Paul's impending trial before a Roman court; and that it is *An Explanatory Statement* conceived for the information of

readers somehow concerned with the decision of his case. Such a theory, of course, raises many points of extraordinary interest; but for the present we shall confine ourselves to one question: Does this theory explain why the author planned and executed the work as we now have it?

With this as a working theory, let us consider what the author, with this object in view, would naturally and necessarily seek to achieve. He, a Gentile Christian himself, conceives himself as writing to Gentile Romans who, in inquiring into Paul's case, are sadly in need of information, and will certainly desire it. What questions of theirs would Luke anticipate and set himself to answer?

Keep in mind that, though Paul's accusers had put forward, as the prime reason for their attack upon him in Jerusalem, that he had defiled their temple, they greatly enlarged the field of accusation when they had to plead against him before Felix. Their charge then was that Paul was a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the empire, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes (xxiv. 5). This last charge was that he was a Christian, and it must have been put into the accusation by Sadducean trickery; for Pharisees who believed and yet had lent support to the agitation against Paul cannot have consented to it. Assuredly Jewish Christians found that partnership

with Jewish Anti-christians carried them farther than they intended. But Sadducees had easier access to Roman ears than had Pharisees; and we find that Paul, in taking his appeal to Cæsar, quite realized how wide the indictment had now become. "Neither against the law of the Jews (said he), nor against the Temple, nor against Cæsar have I sinned at all" (xxv. 8). Thus Luke knew, when he began to write, that he must anticipate some very serious questions in Paul's trial. What would they be?

1. A first question would almost certainly be: "*Is the Christian Religion permissible under Roman law?*"

Roman law permitted the people of a subject state to continue the religion they had at the time they were conquered, but did not permit them to adopt any other except the Roman. The religion of the Jews was thus protected by Roman law, and their religion was defined by their Scriptures, which were, so to speak, *the Charter of their religious rights*. Roman law could not therefore refuse its protection to any form of the Jewish religion that was "according to the Scriptures." Had the Christian faith, then, Scripture authority?

Now in the first two sections of Acts—the story of the beginning of the faith—the thing most conspicuously brought out is not the way in which the Apostles witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus, though this must

have been the most powerful factor in winning the earliest converts among the Jews, but the way in which Peter argued from Scripture that Jesus was the Jews' expected Messiah, "the Christ." Luke does indeed say, in a single sentence, that the Apostles gave their witness to the Resurrection—as they would, of course, at Pentecost when Peter's "first sermon" was delivered¹; but he regards it of less importance for his purpose to describe this witness and its effect than to report the evidence showing the connection of the Christian faith with the Scriptures. Moreover, it is very significant that, after he has in these first two sections made this connection plain, he does not again introduce Scripture quotations *for the faith* into his book, with the single exception of Paul's "first sermon" at Pisidian Antioch, wherein Peter's line of argument is reproduced, but with a wider application. Scripture quotations *for the fellowship* practised by Paul's Gentile churches will be found in later sections²; but here, in these earliest sections, the right of the Christian faith to the protection of Roman law has been made plain. The question, therefore, which Luke would first anticipate in Paul's trial, has been answered, and does not further concern him in this history.

2. A second question, sure to occur to a Roman mind, would be this: "*Does the*

¹ iv. 33: This was their special commission; cf. i. 8.

² Specially xiii. 46 f.

Supreme Court of the Jews recognize the Christian religion as permissible under Jewish law? "

Our author shows, in Section II, that at first they did not recognize this, for they persecuted the Apostles and forbade the faith; but, in Section III, that they changed their minds, for at the instigation of Gamaliel they decided not to proceed to extremes against the Apostles—a decision which we are left to conclude was the Council's official policy for the next thirty years, notwithstanding Herod's brief persecution.

3. A third question was inevitable, one that must have given Luke much concern before he hit upon the way to answer it. It is this: "*Since Gentile Christians observe certain religious practices that are forbidden in the Jewish National Church, can they claim from Rome the same right to toleration as Jewish Christians who conform to Jewish Church practice? "*

See how the fourth and fifth sections of Acts are planned to deal with a question like this. Luke narrates the beginnings of these divergent practices, one by one, the beginnings only, and just so much of these as suffice to show, first of all, that they were urged by the Holy Spirit (for he never forgets this leading cause of all the wonderful effects he has to relate), but, besides this, that they had either the authority of Scripture, or the approval of the Christian Apostles and Church of Jerusalem, or both. These two sections cover a

period of some twelve years' history (the fourth, three; the fifth, nine); and all the other Church history of this period is left out, even the nine years' ministry of Saul of Tarsus in Syria-Cilicia before he joined Barnabas at Antioch. Let us examine these sections more closely, to make sure that this is so.

The beginnings of three of these divergent practices are described in Section IV, and of a fourth in Section V. Take them in order.

(i) *Difference as to Temple and Law.* This is the story of Stephen's movement, claiming Christian independence of Temple-worship and the ritual of the Law. In telling this story, Luke has to omit, what he is careful to record in the other stories of beginnings, the approval of the Apostles and their disciples in Jerusalem. His silence as to their attitude to Stephen is eloquent. Evidently at the beginning they had not approved; for by the single phrase "except the Apostles" (viii. 1) he confesses that they were not involved in the persecution of Stephen's followers. "The way" that Saul persecuted was the way of Stephen. But Luke makes up for his inability to say that Stephen's views had their approval; for he reports at length Stephen's own appeal to Scripture for witness to the fact that Jehovah was worshipped acceptably long before the Law was given by Moses or Solomon's temple was built, and that the prophets claimed independence of the Temple.

He thus conveys to his reader that independence of both Temple and Law, which Paul's accusers held illegal, was as fully authorized under the Jews' own charter as was the dependence these adversaries insisted on; in short, that the Gentile way was legally as permissible as the Jerusalem way of worship.

(ii) *Difference as to Fellowship with Circumcised Outcasts from Jewish Church Fellowship.* The Jewish State Church debarred from fellowship both Samaritans and eunuchs. Gentile Christians received them. Luke here explains how the more liberal practice began with Philip's work. The point to notice is that he insists not only that it was the work of the Holy Spirit, but also was guided by the Scriptures and approved (so far as concerned the Samaritans) by the Apostles and Church in Jerusalem. A section of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem would certainly have objected to the Apostles approving, but the issue evidently was the acquiescence of the Christian Church there; for Peter and John must have reported (viii. 25).

(iii) *Difference as to Gospel Preaching.* The story of Saul's conversion is told with dramatic power and much fulness, because in the author's mind it was the beginning of preaching to Gentiles, and because this Saul is going to appear later in the book when not beginnings but serious consequences are to be reported. It is, however, noteworthy that Luke does not at this point expressly say that

it was for preaching to Gentiles that Saul's life was in danger in both Damascus and Jerusalem, and yet before he closes his history he allows Paul to inform Agrippa that it was preaching to Gentiles he was called to at his conversion and that he had forthwith obeyed the call.—xxvi. 15-21.

Now this silence of Luke was tactful, if our theory as to his purpose in writing this history is correct. He has said enough to let his reader see that Paul's preaching was different from Peter's, since *Paul's life was in danger and Peter's was not*. But he does not say what the difference was. Similarly, he makes no reference to the fact that Saul continued his Gentile ministry in Syria-Cilicia for nine years before Barnabas called him to his side at Antioch; nor does he make any reference to Paul's withstanding Peter to the face at Antioch, within this same period. Moreover he here suppresses, or postpones revealing, the fact that this Saul of Tarsus is the man known to the reader as Paul the prisoner on trial. We say that in all these silences, as in many more in the book, the author is tactful. What is the tactful reason here? Is it not that he thinks he had better let his reader see Peter preaching to Gentiles before he speaks of Paul doing so? He will even not advertize that Saul of Tarsus is Paul, till he has first shown him, like any other Jew, working harmoniously with an accredited deputy of the Jewish Christian Church.

(iv) *Difference as to Fellowship with Uncircumcised Gentiles.* The stories of how this divergence from Church practice in Jerusalem was first taken part in by leading representatives of the Jewish Christian Church (Peter at Cæsarea and Barnabas at Antioch) and acquiesced in by their Jerusalem brethren, occupy the main part of Section V. The story of Peter's vision and all that came of it is told with extraordinary emphasis and repetition. The justification of his action is described as the moving of the Holy Spirit and of Scripture (x. 36, 43). Only it must be noted that express quotation of Scripture as authority for the step is not here recorded. That is reserved for the next section when Paul is depicted "turning to the Gentiles." But the most is made of the approval of the Jerusalem Christians.

Moreover, this first step of Peter's is the only one of the kind recorded of him in the book, while many steps of Paul in the same direction will presently be described. There is not a hint in Acts that Peter ever preached another Gentile sermon, though doubtless when he had a Gentile audience he often did so. Our point is that the author's purpose is sufficiently achieved when he has exhibited the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, among whom were now "many myriads who believed, all zealous for the Law," and not a few of them agitators against Paul, as having been themselves constrained through Peter and Barnabas

to recognize Gentile believers, albeit uncircumcised, as sharers with themselves in the fellowship of the Faith.

Having told the story of this action of Peter's, Luke gives a rapid account of how the Gentile Church in Antioch was founded, really before Peter's fellowship with Cornelius and his friends (see p. 148 ff.), and how Barnabas from Jerusalem delighted in this new departure and summoned Saul of Tarsus to his aid in fostering its growth. By this means Luke strengthens in his reader's mind the assurance that this new movement was not confined to Paul. The approval of the Jewish Christian sect in Jerusalem was important because they were tolerated there. *They* were not accused.

We are now able to look back on these accounts of the beginnings of the four divergent practices, or three rather (since Saul's conversion and subsequent preaching connects with the fourth), and find that they are a direct answer to the anticipated question, whether Gentile Christians had equal right with Jewish Christians to protection under Roman law. The answer is that they have the authority of Scripture, as in the Stephen development, or have this and the added approval of the Jewish Christian Church itself, as in the developments that acknowledged the fellowship of believing Samaritans and Gentiles.

(v) *Difference caused by Herod's Perse-*

cution. This, as already said, is not the story of a difference in Christian practice as compared with Jewish Church practice, but a difference in religious experience—the experience of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem as compared with non-Christians there. It would seem as if the author adds this story as an appendix before he closes Part First of his book. It may be asked what this story has to do with Paul's trial: and our answer is that it has much to do therewith. Herod drove Christians out of Jerusalem into the society and fellowship of the Gentile Churches in the Diaspora. Luke begins the story with the words "About that time" (xii. 1), that is, about the time that Peter preached to Gentiles at Cæsarea and Barnabas evangelized them at Antioch. He had begun the fifth section thus: "It came to pass that, as Peter went throughout all parts, etc." (ix. 32) and proceeded to tell how he preached to Gentiles. Peter would be wandering "through all parts" *after* his flight from Herod's prison. Even so Barnabas would have been constrained to flee from Herod's persecution at the time he was commissioned to visit Antioch.

Be this as it may, "about that time" Herod did more by persecution to take the scales of prejudice from Peter's eyes than much argument would have done. Both Peter and Barnabas learned to love Gentiles better through being worse hated by Jews.

That, however, was now an old story, and Herod's death had restored to the Jewish Christians the old toleration in Jerusalem. But it would be no part of Luke's business to state formally even so much as this, if he were writing in view of Paul's trial. Why did he refer to Herod's persecution at all? We believe he saw that he could not, without harm to the cause he wished to benefit, pass this by. Herod was Cæsar's friend; his attitude towards Christians was known to the emperor; and therefore in a book meant to be read by persons likely to be in close touch with Cæsar, it could not be ignored. But, since he *must* tell this story, he is minded so to tell it that it shall make a proper impression. God delivered Peter from Herod's power, and Herod miserably perished. Let Cæsar, in dealing with Paul, take warning.

The First Part of Acts has now been found to answer certain legal questions sure to arise in an inquiry into Paul's case; and though we cannot yet claim that Luke must have planned these five sections in view of Paul's trial, since he might have planned them for a more general purpose, such as making Gentile Christianity intelligible and acceptable to people of his own day, yet we ask our readers' consent that the plan so far does support our working theory passing well.

Now, however, Part Second of the book not only supports this theory, but demands it. For not now are general questions of the legal

right of Christianity, Jewish or Gentile, anticipated and dealt with, but particular questions of the personal conduct of one man, namely Paul. For he is now (xiii. 9) introduced to the reader as "Saul who is also called Paul"; and it is mainly *his* doings and experiences during the twelve or thirteen years after the famine visit to Jerusalem with Barnabas, that are narrated in this latter and much the longer part of the book. And these are doings and experiences, be it observed, not in the edifying of the Christian Church (Cæsar would have no interest in that) but in public conflict with others who opposed and accused him in respect of those very differences in religious practice whose beginnings have been carefully set forth.

Let us therefore proceed as before; and ask what other questions Luke, if he wrote in view of Paul's impending trial, would anticipate and try to answer.

4. A fourth question would be as follows (for at all events the sixth and seventh sections are framed to offer an answer to it): "*Paul is charged with sedition and with propagating an illegal religion. What are the facts?*"

Before addressing himself to the facts which supply the answer to this question, our author, having described how Paul and Barnabas were sent out together on a mission to Gentiles by the Holy Spirit and by the Church of Syrian Antioch, having also introduced Paul

by name, and having described how the proconsul of Cyprus was won by the discomfiture of a noted sorcerer—an event that could easily be verified by questioning the proconsul—proceeds (by way of an introduction to this part of the book) to describe, once for all, Paul's method and message when he came to a new city in which was a Jewish Synagogue.

Luke is mindful that, in telling how Peter began to preach to Gentiles at Cæsarea, he had not been able to say, or at least had not said, that Peter justified his action on the scriptural grounds that Paul took. Accordingly he describes Paul's "turning to the Gentiles" at Pisidian Antioch, with special emphasis on the scriptural warrant quoted by the Apostle, namely, "I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth" (xiii. 47). So that, if in his reader's mind there lingers a doubt as to Peter's justification from Scripture, there shall be none as to Paul's.

Thereupon there follows in Sections VI and VII a series of brief records bearing on the question as to Paul's participation in sedition and illegal preaching. The former, answering as to sedition, shows how Paul for preaching to Gentiles was opposed by riots raised, not by him, but against him, by Jewish opponents—riot upon riot, in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the result of which, and

of course the purpose of which, was his ejection from city after city without any legal charge being made against him. He was simply required, with Barnabas and his company, to depart, for the preservation of the public peace.

The other section, answering as to propagating an illegal religion, describes how Paul's adversaries, having failed for many months to shut his mouth by riot, resorted next to charges at law. At Philippi he was accused of proselytizing Romans¹; at Thessalonica of preaching treason; at Corinth of organizing an illegal Church contrary to Jewish law;² in which last city the proconsul decided in his favour, after which he was able to pursue his ministry in peace, both at Corinth and at Ephesus for several years.

Furthermore it is significant that these two sections are so planned as to close each with a decision in Paul's favour, or in favour of his Gentile churches. In Section VI it is the decision of the Christian Council of Jerusalem, on the circumcision question; in Section VII it is the above-mentioned decision of the proconsul Gallio at Corinth.³ And if, again, there should be a thought in his reader's mind that the decision of a Christian Council would hardly be accepted as a sufficient plea by

¹ Though it is not clear that Jewish accusers took an active part in this action (xvi. 22).

² xvii. 7.

³ xv. 6 ff.; xviii. 17.

Romans, Luke brings in the scriptural justification quoted by James in moving the Council's decision—"That the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called" (xv. 14-18). This is remarkable as being the first direct and formal appeal reported in Acts as having been made by a representative of the *Jewish* Christian Church to Scripture warrant for fellowship with Gentiles—a belated appeal, no doubt, but effective when made.

5. There is embedded in each of these two sections an address of Paul's to a purely Pagan community, which, to our mind, suggests that Luke anticipates a question like this: "*Did not Paul lay himself open to the charge of illegal proselytizing?*"—a fifth question, which he must needs answer.

Roman law forbade proselytizing or attempting to turn people within the empire from their own permitted religion to any other than the Roman. The Jewish religion, however, was bound in duty to win proselytes to the faith of Jehovah, and Roman law must have regarded proselytizing as privileged "according to their Scriptures." Yet there must have been a limit dictated, even to the Jews, by Roman law. Proselytes to Judaism came from a class of Gentiles familiar with synagogue worship and voluntarily entering the Jewish Church. If, however, a propaganda were directed towards the purely pagan, it must have assumed the character of illegal

proselytizing. That, apparently, was the charge against Paul and Silas at Philippi. In any case the oft-occurring necessity of addressing audiences with no knowledge of Jehovah or the Scriptures during a quarter of a century's ministry to the Gentiles, could hardly fail to incur for Paul the risk of violating the law in this matter. It therefore seems to us that in reporting how he addressed the people of Lystra in Section VI, and the Areopagus court of Athens in Section VII, Luke's intention is to show how correct was his conduct and unchallengeable his speech on such occasions.

Before passing from these two sections, which themselves cover a period of twelve years (while the last section, up to the trial before Felix, covers just so many weeks at most), let us reflect that this is the period in which were written the longest and historically most important letters of Paul which we possess.¹ We gather from them, directly or indirectly, a great deal of vital Christian history, to which no reference is made in Acts. Paul's "care of all the Churches" at this time was oppressing him; so much had he to do in founding and fostering, confirming and counselling them. Never was there a busier missionary. Yet those two sections give no idea of all this; they relate only such history of him as is concerned with

¹ Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, 1 Timothy, and Titus. See later discussions.

opposition to his work. The author makes a very strict selection of events to be recorded; and the important thing for our present purpose is that what he does select is found to be a direct answer to the question we suppose Luke to have anticipated—namely, what are the facts as to Paul's conduct with reference to sedition and illegal religion?

One other feature about Luke's history of these twelve years should be noted here, before we become absorbed in the very different kind of story in the last section. It is this, that Luke plainly challenges the strictest scrutiny of Rome in all these narratives. He invites it. No wonder that the labours of scholarship have now disclosed the fact that throughout this book the author is correct in even the minutiae of his history, and that the doubts cast upon the accuracy of Acts in a past generation have now changed to expressions of admiration.¹ The author mentions Paul by his Roman name before he begins this part of his history; for he knows that in the archives of Rome a Jewish Roman of this name must often have been mentioned in reports of magistrates to Cæsar. But in particular he chooses events, the record of which can easily be tested for its accuracy—

¹ There is now only one fact that seems at variance with other histories, left to account for. This is Gamaliel's references to Judas and Theudas in his speech to the Council. There are that would have us believe Josephus is right, and Luke wrong. It is a fair test of trustworthiness. We stand by Luke.

public events, an inquiry into which will provide the answer to this anticipated question in the Apostle's trial. He invites scrutiny and is careful to meet its challenge.

6. We come now to the sixth question that Luke anticipates. We can tell what the question was by an examination of Section VIII A as well as if he had formally expressed it. It is this: "*If all that has been said for Christianity—Jewish or Gentile—and for Paul, be true, how came Paul to be arraigned before Felix?*"

Section VIII A of the plan of Acts (xix. 21—xxiv. 23) seems to us to eliminate all possible theories as to the author's purpose in writing, which up to this point might be said to have support from the plan, except ours: This theory alone has the support of the last section.

What is the answer given to this most likely question arising in Paul's trial? It is that Paul has been arrested and accused before the Roman Court, not because preaching Christ is illegal, not because the Sanhedrin are intolerant of Christians, not because he himself is of the school of Stephen in his attitude to the temple and the law, not because he has been preaching to Gentiles, not because he is guilty of sedition or has violated Roman law in any respect—although in their accusations they are ready to insist on any or all of these charges—but simply and solely because his accusers, having failed to frighten

him by riots or to muzzle him by legal action, had been for weeks past conspiring, by every means, to kill him; and being caught in the temple in the act of lynching him and therefore compelled to account for their conduct, have excused themselves by pretending to believe that he has defiled their temple, and then, challenged to formulate their charges against him in open court, by accusing not himself only, but also his religion of "sinning against Cæsar." For their one hope is, on one count or another, to compass his death.

We lay so much stress on the contents of this section as a witness to Luke's purpose in writing it that we shall attempt to analyse it somewhat in detail. It is mainly a record of conspiracy after conspiracy against Paul's life.

(1) How would the story of the Uproar at Ephesus affect Paul's trial? In two ways. In the first place, it will be placed alongside the report of the Town-clerk, who without doubt has sent his version of the occurrence to Rome, in which Paul will be mentioned. In the second place, it reveals a fact which this official will not have reported, that Paul's life on that occasion was saved by the intervention of friends of his own who were also friends of Cæsar—certain Asiarchs ("Chiefs of Asia"), men on whom, for their services to the Emperor in Asia, the coveted title of Asiarch had been conferred. This ought to help Paul's case.

(2) Next comes the plot to assassinate him at sea, frustrated by change of both ship and route. The knowledge that this was an attempt to evade interference by a Roman magistrate will help a favourable view of Paul's case.

(3) The long story of the voyage to Jerusalem is a picture of haunting danger, foreboding fears and loving sympathy of honest law-abiding folk, anxious for Paul's safety and pleading with him not to go to Jerusalem; and it affords an opportunity, in passing, of recording Paul's speech to the elders of Ephesus, a set-off to the charges made against his work in Ephesus at the Uproar, showing as it does what has really been the manner and spirit of this man's labours in that city, as those Asiarchs will testify if applied to.

(4) Arriving at Jerusalem, Paul is plainly told by James that the danger to his life is such that it could be averted only by conciliating "myriads of Christians zealous for the law," by performing a Temple vow. The danger to Paul's life therefore had its centre in Jerusalem.

(5) Paul is set upon within the Temple itself and dragged forth to be killed without delay. But again his life is saved, this time by intervention of a Roman officer, who can be questioned about it.

(6) Thereupon follow reports of his speeches in defence of his life and work as a good Jew--

personal *apologiæ* offered to his own countrymen to throw oil on the troubled waters; but at the mention of the word "Gentiles" only wild confusion and wrath are excited, so that the officer, not knowing the Hebrew tongue in which Paul spoke at this crisis, was puzzled to account for it, as again when Paul addressed the Jewish Council.

(7) Even while yet in custody of this officer a plot to assassinate him was formed. Therefore it will be apparent that his accusers knew very well that they had no case against him in the Roman courts to which he would now be sent; they knew their only chance of dealing out to him what *they* thought justice was to murder him without trial.

(8) The plot being frustrated by Paul's being sent to Felix at Cæsarea, Felix orders his accusers to make their charges before himself. And what were the charges? Sacrilege (a pretence), and the wider, and ever widening, accusations as to both his conduct as a citizen, and his religion. The lines of Paul's reply are reported; but evidently not with great fulness. For the writer remembers that Paul has not been tried yet; he has only been examined by Felix, who had said, "I will hear thee again of this matter." That hearing had not taken place.

Is there any doubt that this section (to this point, Section VIII A), long, detailed, and full of pleadings as it is, explains the whole circumstances leading to Paul's trial, *with the*

knowledge that the trial has not been concluded? It has not been Luke's way in previous sections, when describing other critical situations in the Apostle's career, to use so much detail, to expose so many facts bearing on the question at issue, or to exercise with so much pains his literary skill in persuasive presentation. A few pregnant sentences have sufficed, when he could say the incident was closed. Paul's enemies caused much trouble by riots, but Luke has described them in the briefest form, because he could relate the Christian council's decision which practically put an end to them. They tried charges at law, very serious for the accused, but they have been reported in a swift sentence or two, because Gallio's decision put an end to them. Such is the manner of the two previous sections about Paul. But now the decision is not known and the manner and measure are very different. Is not this section of studied detail an effort to avert an adverse decision? Had Paul's trial before the Roman court at Cæsarea been ended, would he not, after his previous manner in the book, have related the whole story in a tenth part of the space at least? In short, when Section VIII A was written the case was not settled, and the book was undertaken and written in view of this fact, before a final decision should be given.

Section B, beginning with the failure of Felix, the arrival of Festus, and the Appeal,

continues the story by a kind of appendix.¹ One sees in this appendix the hand of a writer with more leisure to write than had the hand which hastened to be ready for the trial. The story of the voyage is the work of a skilful writer with plenty of time to take pains, an artist taking a favourable opportunity of painting at his best. But this appendix interests us more because it is a most natural and effective answer to a question that Luke will now anticipate with misgiving.

7. The seventh question anticipated would be something such as this : "*Is it worth while dispensing justice to an inconsiderable Jew against the judgment of our new governor in Palestine, who would have let the Jewish rulers have their own way with him?*"

The answer of Section *B* (xxiv. 24—xxviii. 31) is that Paul, in the opinion of Agrippa, Cæsar's friend and a king well acquainted with Jewish law, has right on his side and ought to have been set free (by Felix, long ago); that in any case he is not an inconsiderable Jew, as can easily be ascertained by questioning the officer who had charge of him on the voyage and who found him a Jewish Roman of mighty moral force; and that, if the Jews in Rome are consulted, they must bear favourable testimony to his conduct there, as it is here described.

¹ This appendix may have been in Luke's mind when he spoke of Acts (i. 1) as the *first*, not the *former*, treatise.

And with this the book was to end and pass into the hands of such as were meant to read it—Theophilus and such about Cæsar's court as he could approach; probably Poppæa, the favourite mistress of Cæsar, herself a Jewish proselyte; and not improbably Seneca, the famous, who was then a power at court and who had at least a friend named Theophilus with whom he corresponded; for his seventh letter is addressed to one Theophilus.

But "two years" waiting brought none from Jerusalem to accuse Paul before Cæsar, and by Roman law he was therefore acquitted.¹ There was nothing now for Luke to do with his book but state this simple fact at the end. To us it seems an abrupt ending, but to those who read it first it meant Paul's trial had ended with his acquittal and freedom. What a relief it must have been for Luke to write that last sentence! And what a precious document the book was for the Christian Church to preserve!

All very interesting, no doubt; but have all the features in Acts been dealt with in this discussion of the plan, from the first section to the last? Is there not a vast deal in the book that has not been considered yet, in view of the theory that the author's purpose was an explanatory statement in support of Paul's case?

Yes, certainly; the history in Acts that

¹ See Ramsay's "The Teaching of Paul, etc.," Chap. L, specially pp. 364 ff.

Luke thought it necessary to include for this purpose, is not yet exhausted. We have yet to deal with two questions he was sure to anticipate—an eighth question and a ninth. Let us see if they are likely questions to have been asked by judges of Paul's case.

8. The eighth question is difficult to put in few words; but it is somewhat thus: "*Does not the fact that Peter, the original leader of the Christians in Jerusalem, is tolerated by Jewish State officials, while Paul is not, imply that the public peace has been disturbed through disagreement of the inferior with the superior?*"

Luke of course knew, as we too know from Paul's letters, that for some time a very determined effort had been made among Christians to depreciate Paul's authority in comparison with Peter's. He had every reason to fear this effort would be carried into the Roman court. Though he never mentions the matter in the book, it is present to his mind *all the time*, and he contrives to leave with his reader the impression that between Peter and Paul there is no disagreement and that neither is superior to the other. He is, it is true, silent as to any disagreement of Peter with Stephen's views at first, a disagreement that Saul of Tarsus more than shared at the same time; but in the issue he shows these two Apostles as seeing eye to eye. And as to their relative claims to authority, it is one of the extraordinary features of Acts that stories of the outstanding personalities and

powers of these two men are almost perfectly balanced.

Parallel incidents in their ministries are selected which sometimes serve the double purpose of telling developments in Church history and at the same time showing the manner of men they were; and sometimes they were inserted for the latter purpose only. But all of them conspire to present two men of equally pre-eminent gifts and Apostolic efficiency. Wonders were wrought by both. Belief was common in healing through contact with their bodies (Peter's shadow, Paul's clothes). At the instance of each a demoniac was powerfully influenced, a sorcerer discomfited, and a dead person restored. Each had a miraculous escape from prison. At the ministrations of each occurred the outpouring of the Spirit and the gift of tongues. Both argued on the same lines from the same Scriptures; and though Peter did not, in the electric atmosphere of Jerusalem, preach to Gentiles, yet outside Jerusalem he did—preach even as Paul.

Acts is content that Paul should appear as “not a whit *behind* the chiefest Apostle”; and on our theory of the book, this was enough. To have done more would not have helped Paul's case with the Romans, or with the Christian public into whose hands the book was sure to come.

9. The ninth—and last—question we shall consider as anticipated by Luke if he wrote

in view of Paul's impending trial is this: "*Is it advisable to vindicate the religious right of Christians, Jew or Gentile, against the present Jewish rulers' opposition?*" Of all questions, we presume, this question would be most dreaded by the author of Acts; and the answer to it also runs through the whole book, everywhere insisting that this is indeed just what ought to be done. The reader feels that this is no religious movement to be trifled with; that there is a mighty power behind it; that, as Gamaliel said, suppressing it may be fighting against God. A large number of minor incidents, tense in interest and terse in form, are handled so as to produce and perpetuate this feeling. Luke does not allow his zeal to outrun his discretion; he adheres to his plan; but all the time he is preaching the gospel. A redeemed pagan himself, he tells to pagan hearts the doings of the Holy Spirit, the power of the name of Jesus, the praises of God. Could the imperial politics of even Rome in that age entirely disregard an appeal like this?

We have confined ourselves to an exposition of the Plan of Acts and its contents, finding in these a wonderful reasonableness in the theory that it was immediately occasioned by Paul's trial. Surely it is not a mere accident that these nine questions, all of them extremely likely to be asked by Romans concerned to judge of Paul's case, should, as to the first seven of them, be answered methodically

section by section of the Plan, and, as to the last two, be answered everywhere wheresoever opportunity offered and thus with great cumulative effect.

OMISSIONS IN ACTS

There is, however, another line of argument, still bearing on the author's plan, to which special attention ought to be given. It is the argument from the omissions—things the plan is *designed to exclude* or things omitted in the narratives of what is included.

Broadly speaking, of course, if the book is written for the purpose we presume, the omitted Church history of these thirty years is omitted because it is of no importance, as being irrelevant in a statement intended to throw light on questions raised in a legal case like Paul's, or, because it would not help his cause if recorded, possibly do it harm. If, then, there are omissions that we can well explain on no other ground than this, these omissions will as positively support our theory as inclusions that seem to call for it. An author must be excused and commended for omitting all and every information that does not serve the object for which he writes, provided always that by silence he does not create a false impression. Now the silences of Acts have been used only too freely to bolster up conflicting speculations as to early Church history. How often an historical

fact attested by the Epistles is questioned and even denied because "Acts knows nothing of it"; and how often on such an occasion have we found ourselves protesting that perhaps Acts may have "determined not to know anything" of it, for good reasons of its own!

Let us therefore briefly regard some of the more significant omissions in the book, more especially those that conspire to support our theory by having their best explanation offered by it. Conspire, I say, because the accumulating witness of many instances, comparatively trifling in themselves, but together pointing in one direction, may gather irresistible weight. Moreover some omissions may be adequately explained by one, others by another, and yet others by a third theory of the author's main purpose in writing, but the only theory that can stand is that which explains satisfactorily all the omissions.

Let us ask the reader therefore, if he chances to have another theory than ours as to the occasion and purpose of the writing of Acts, to test his theory by supplying its answers to a series of questions, which we shall now put and answer by means of the working theory we have been discussing. If, cleaving to one theory and not nimbly alternating more theories than one in order to find an answer, he is able to supply a fitting answer to them all, then we shall confess our working theory has a formidable rival.

(1) *Why is there no account of the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem except in Paul's direction?*

Answer: Because Paul's trial did not demand it, and it would have been irrelevant in a statement explanatory of matters emerging in the trial.

(2) *Why is there no history of the Church in Jerusalem after the narrative of Stephen's martyrdom?*

Answer: Because the only questions raised by the trial and having to do with the Jerusalem Church and its history were questions as to the origin and legal justification of (1) the Christian religion, and (2) the divergence of Paul's Gentile Churches from the recognized practice of the Jewish Church in regard to the Temple and the Law. *And these only are dealt with.*

(3) *Why is there no account of how certain Church movements continued to progress in the places where they began, except (in a measure) the Gentile movement in Syrian Antioch?*

Answer: Because the only question as to these movements, raised by the trial of Paul, was their legal right and the share the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem had in encouraging them—which question is sufficiently answered in the accounts of their beginnings; and the exception as to the Gentile movement in Antioch is due to the fact that Paul had set out

thence on the Gentile mission, his conduct in which was challenged.

(4) *Why is there no adequate account in Acts of events in the early Church that made for peace and spiritual prosperity, but many full accounts of events that made for strife and division?*

Answer: Because in a legal case like Paul's the causes of strife and division are the things inquired into. Roman law did not ask why there was peace and love, but why there was "dispeace" and strife.

(5) *Why, in the story of the founding of the Faith, is there no more than brief reference to the Apostles' witness to the Resurrection, while their arguments from Scripture are fully detailed?*

Answer: Because a Roman court of law would, in a case like Paul's, be unconcerned about the former but sharply inquisitive about the latter.

(6) *Why are there no quotations from Scripture in support of the Faith, after the first two sections, except in the report of Paul's "first sermon" at Pisidian Antioch?*

Answer: Because the author thinks he has in these two sections sufficiently shown the legal authority for the Faith, and there is no occasion to repeat the evidences, except to note that Paul, the accused, took the same ground.

(7) *Why is there no account of the spread of Gentile Christianity except in Paul's direction?*

Answer : Because it was Paul's Gentile Christianity that was challenged in his trial and the facts concerning *it* were alone relevant to the trial. It cannot therefore be assumed, on the ground that such a fact is not mentioned here, that Gentiles had not then been won to the Faith in other parts of the Dispersion.

(8) *Why is no notice taken of the attitude of the Apostles to Stephen, while a full account of their attitude to Philip in Samaria is supplied?*

Answer : Because, apparently, they did not favour Stephen's views, as neither did Paul at the time, though *now* he did. To have emphasized their disapproval of Stephen's teaching about the Temple and the Law would not have helped Paul's case; whereas the account of their approval of Philip's work somewhat later *would help*, since that work was on all fours with Stephen's in respect that it was a departure from Jewish Church ritual law. Moreover the author makes up for not being able to report the Apostle's approval of Stephen, by showing how well he unfolded the approval of Scripture for his position—in the eye of the law, the more effective defence.

(9) *Why is there in Acts no picture of internal Church life such as is discernible in the Epistles?*

Answer : Because it would have been of no interest to the Roman court, as in any

way affecting the judgment of Paul's case.

(10) *Why is there no description of Paul's "care of all the Churches," no reference to letters he wrote which are of incalculable importance in the Church history of the time, nor any account of how he "confirmed the Churches"?*

Answer: For the same reason as the last. Rome was not concerned with these things, nor would inquiry regarding them be likely to occur in Paul's trial.

(11) *Why is there in Acts no statement of so important a matter as the Apostles' Teaching, the "creed" of the early Church?*

Answer: Because, beyond the fundamental facts (faith in Jesus Christ and its scriptural justification), the creed did not concern the settlement of Paul's case, and, if fully detailed to Romans, would only have complicated the case being tried.

(12) *Why is there no reference to contemporary preachings to Gentiles within the Roman world, other than those given?*

Answer: Not because there were no preachings other than those recorded (concerning which we do not know), but because those recorded had directly to do with the charges against Paul, first, in view of a probable claim that Peter conformed to Jewish practice while Paul did not (hence the story of Peter's Gentile preaching); and, second, in view

of charges that Paul's Gentile preaching was both seditious and illegal (hence Sections VI and VII). [See (7).]

(13) *Why is there no revelation that Paul preached to Gentiles at Damascus?*

Answer: Because the author thought his reader should learn that Peter preached to Gentiles before he should be shown how Paul did it—that is, his silence was tactful. If he thought to prevent an impression unfavourable to Paul entering the reader's mind, with the chance that it might linger there even when it transpired that it should be banished, the omission would serve this purpose. It would the more certainly produce the truthful impression that ought to abide—namely, that Peter did what Paul is accused of doing.

(14) *Why is there no reference whatever to Paul's nine or ten years' Gentile ministry in Syria-Cilicia?*

Answer: Either for the same reason as before, or because Luke did not need to go back to the first ten years' ministry when he came to Part Second, seeing he had enough material to select from in the last twelve years before the trial, in order to answer as to sedition and illegal religion.

(15) *Why is there no mention of the name "Paul" in Part First?*

Answer: Because the author has decided not to introduce to his Roman reader the man under trial till he is ready

to deal with the specific charges against him—charges as to personal conduct. Part First deals with general questions of religious right, affecting the whole class of Christians inside or outside Jerusalem. Part Second deals with the personal conduct and experience of the individual under trial.

(16) *Why is there no reference to the Apostolic Agreement mentioned in Gal. ii. 1-10, by which the Apostles to Jews recognized the Apostles to Gentiles?*

Answer: Because, although this agreement would have been of great importance in helping to a favourable settlement of Paul's case and therefore to be desired in a statement meant to assist the defence, it could not be narrated for the very sufficient reason that it was a private agreement not open to scrutiny of Paul's accusers (Gal. ii. 2). For every fact that Luke wrote in Paul's defence he knew must be in public knowledge, attestable and unassailable.

(17) *Why is there no reference to Paul's withstanding Peter to the face in Antioch, when Paul and Barnabas were co-working there?*

Answer: Because it would have served no good purpose in Paul's trial to have this event discussed.

(18) *Why are there in Acts no detailed accounts of events in Paul's ministry except such as are specially fitted to answer questions*

arising from charges against him—events that bring him into conflict with legal authorities?

Answer : Because the book was written exclusively for the very purpose of dealing with such events as these latter.

(19) *Why is there practically no Church history in the last section of Acts, though it occupies a third of the whole book, except for attempts on Paul's life, and what they led to?*

Answer : Because the narrative of these events will reveal to the reader the real occasion of Paul's arrest and trial, and therefore it is written with the utmost emphasis, as a *tour de force*; for the reader who perceives the significance of these facts cannot but perceive that it is not Paul that is guilty.

Now, has our reader a theory of the purpose of the book of Acts that offers a satisfactory explanation of *all these omissions*, not some of them only? For ourselves we have found none other fitted to do so than the theory that the book was written in immediate view of Paul's approaching trial; so that we make bold to affirm that the book, far from being planned (as we have it) by a series of editors or redactors, at various dates, and for changing historical or theological purposes, was *planned by one mind* (or by minds acting as one), *at one time* (and that time easily determined), *and for one purpose*. Certainly the authorship of *the plan* cannot be distributed over a wide space of years.

Finally, there are many interesting questions raised by our theory which are outside the limits of this discussion; for we have had to do with the plan only and its purpose.¹ These must await a later occasion.

Objections to the theory will obtrude themselves, but they too must await such occasion. Chief of them all will be that one consequence of accepting the theory would be a revolution in New Testament criticism, interpretation of its history, and even estimate of its theology—a reaction from many generally accepted conclusions of scholarship, not to say from much unfettered speculation more inviting to the imagination than strengthening to faith. But the spirit of scholarship, which in our own day has scrapped so much, will not complain of its own findings being scrapped in turn, if only this comes by the shining of “a clear pure light” such as radiates from Luke’s own expressly fashioned lantern when the cobwebs of neglect are cleared away.

¹ Seventy years ago, Aberle, a German professor, argued that Acts was written for Paul’s trial. A friend has drawn attention to this; Aberle’s article appeared at the time when the Baur school was in the ascendant. His theory was treated somewhat cavalierly by scholars, then and later. They dismissed it with “Impossible,” “Cannot be proved,” etc. Had Aberle perceived the significance of the plan, how greatly would his suggestion have been strengthened! Ours is therefore not the first attempt to show that the Book of Acts was written for an occasion so momentous to Paul and Gentile Christianity. And—the plan has to be accounted for.

CHAPTER IV

THE NECESSITY FOR THE BOOK OF ACTS

FROM our study of the structure of Acts and its implications we have seen strong reason for regarding the book as an explanatory statement specially prepared to elucidate questions as to the legality of the Christian Faith and Fellowship and as to the Apostle Paul's conduct and experience which would be raised by his forthcoming trial before a Roman court of law.

We propose now to discuss an important consideration supporting this conclusion, but based on quite different grounds. This consideration is that an explanatory history in some shape or form must have been provided in view of the final trial,—such a document as was not likely to be lost sight of in the early centuries of the faith, and such therefore as is likely to be this same book of Acts, since none other is extant.

That early Christian tradition does not seem to have contemplated this idea is no barrier to our entertaining it. For there is only too good reason to conclude that much "early" tradition superseded still earlier tradition, causing it to be forgotten. Moreover, early tradition, such as it is, affords

little help in determining the occasion on (or for) which the Gospels and Epistles were written. No doubt, in the period which is often spoken of as Early Christian, *but very late in it*, information as to the occasion or date of Paul's epistles was volunteered in the shape of a subscript-note closing each Epistle; but the slightest inquiry into the internal evidence of the letters themselves shows these notes are quite wrong, based not on reliable tradition but on the critical judgment of the note-makers, whose sources of information were the same as our own, namely, the internal evidence. That they acquired an air of authority, as if each were part of the original Epistle, has proved disastrous; and the Revised Version leaves out every one of them. The Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles, all alike, are their own witness to both the occasion and the date of their composition. Neither by affirming nor by denying is tradition of either help or hindrance; it does not count; it cannot discount. It ought never to be appealed to for more than evidence that at the time it was written somebody was of a certain opinion. In any case the fact that tradition does *not* suggest that Acts was meant for an explanatory history such as we conclude, counts for nothing.

Is there anything in the circumstances described in Acts, or revealed in contemporary New Testament writings, that would justify

the idea that, everything considered, such a history must have been provided against the hearing of Paul's case? We think to get the reader's consent to an answer in the affirmative—that there is reason for saying the idea is justified, nay, even demanded. But to win that consent we must recall *all* the circumstances of the occasion, and gather the inferences bearing on this point from a joint review of them. Furthermore we invite the reader to an exercise of the imagination—a well-instructed imagination, of course, such as a remembrance of all these circumstances will secure.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES

Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, is a prisoner in Cæsarea, interned in "Herod's Prætorium" (xxiii. 35), now Cæsar's Prætorium, for Herod is long since dead. He is a Roman citizen with a Roman's rights, and a Jew belonging to a family of means and position. Before his Christian days, as a young ruler in the Jewish Council, he was a keen persecutor of Christians of Stephen's type. He is a man of superior education, intelligence, capacity, resourcefulness and address. He is not without experience of the workings of both Jewish and Roman law. He is well aware of the extreme danger of his present position, with the chief rulers of his own people ready to go any length in

order to compass his death. Personal risk, however, does not move him; he has faced death for Christ's name too often for that. But he is the representative of a cause, not the cause of Christianity only, but in particular of Gentile Christianity; and he reckons it of great importance to this cause that his enemies should not triumph over him now. He even looks far ahead; for he would hail the privilege—the perilous privilege—of pleading the Christian cause at Cæsar's judgment-seat; he even anticipates the step that will bring him there—namely, appealing to Cæsar against the decision likely to be given by Felix the governor. This prospect occurred to him the night before he was brought to Cæsarea (xxiii. 11); and it is always present with him now.

He is thinking out some way of enlightening the Roman mind on the facts that ought to govern the issue of his case; for the Romans, with the best intentions to dispense justice, do not understand either Jewish religion or the Christian phase of it. He reflects how for years he has been employing, with excellent results, literary experts like Mark and Luke and many other penmen, in the service of the Christian faith and fellowship; and he broods on the possibility by such means of conveying to these Romans an understanding of these facts. He knows very well that with Felix on the bench and Sadducean grandees plying him with false information,

fulsome flattery and boundless bribery, there is little to encourage the hope of a fair trial, if indeed a trial at all, till the governor's time of office is ended. But a means of enlightening the governor, if it took form in writing, would serve to enlighten Cæsar himself or his courtiers.

What are the accusations against Paul? Rather ask, What will they be? His accusers had already, in the preliminary inquiry before Felix, indicated the length they were prepared to go. They accused him of sacrilege in defiling their temple, of being a public pest, a seditious revolutionary, and also of being a Christian. He denied all but the last—that he was a Christian, but (he said to Felix) being a Christian was “believing all things which are according to the law and which are written in the prophets” (xxiv. 14). This meant that his defence of Christianity before a Roman court of law, which concerned itself only as to whether a religion was *licita* or *illicita*, was that a religion based on the Jewish Scriptures was by law *licita* (permissible).

It is now, however, to be expected that, when the real trial comes on, his accusers, remembering this line of defence and knowing that it commends itself to “myriads” of Christians in Jerusalem, will add to the charge or alter it altogether so as to make it one of being leader of Christians who disregard Jewish law by not conforming to Jewish

religious practices, and who therefore cannot claim Scripture authority equally with Jews who strictly observe the Law of Moses. It is also well within Paul's knowledge that a strong effort will be made to play off conforming Peter against non-conforming Paul. So that, when it is all thought over, there is indeed great need of some historical statement of facts that cannot be gainsaid regarding those things to be expected, as well as facts about sedition, defiling the temple, etc., already charged against him.

Who is to be judge of all these charges and to weigh the evidence? Felix has promised to hear the case again; but he lingers long. He certainly knows a good deal about the Jews politically, but as to their religious beliefs he knows little and cares less. He is no doubt, after the true Roman manner, open to argument; but unhappily he is open also to bribery; and possibly this explains why Paul's accusers are not summoned again to substantiate their charges. This delay may go on as long as a Roman citizen can be held in Imperial custody without a decision of his case. On the other hand, Felix may try the case any day, and the sooner the facts affecting the whole question—all the questions—are prepared for him the better. That is, the facts on which the prisoner will base his defence; not the defence itself, not the argument from the facts.

For these facts cannot be adequately con-

veyed to the Roman mind, unaccustomed as it is to Jewish ways of thinking and acting, in the short session and troubled atmosphere of a public trial. They will require preliminary study, sifting, and testing as to accuracy. This will be all the more necessary if Paul has to appeal to Cæsar, as he fully expects to do; for then the Supreme Court at Rome will need information even more than Felix. Cæsar's judgment-seat is a great arena for the exercise of the gift of oratory. Paul may be counted on to hold his own there. But how hopeless the task for any man, even if himself aided by the Holy Spirit, to win a pagan audience to an understanding of the Christian faith, without first a foundation laid by the communication of the relevant facts of Christian history! If Gospel history and Church history are alike unknown, how can his case be understood? How secure that his appeal shall be made, not to ignorance, but to knowledge? How secure that the facts to be relied on shall be sifted and verified, and understood, in good time, at least before the Supreme Court at Rome comes to deal with the case?

Such is the direction in which the Apostle's thoughts inevitably drift. He is not the man to let the case be lost by default. The problem has but to present itself, and a solution will leap from the depths of his resource and energy. He has friends around him, shrewd in judgment and great in counsel:

he will consult them. For in consideration of his rank and social consequence he has been permitted by Felix to have all and any friends visiting him, even dwelling with him as "fellow-prisoners," in character as slaves (xxiv. 23). In particular there have been with him in this prison nine men whose names we know; for they accompanied him as "the Apostles of the Churches" carrying to Jerusalem "the Collection for the Saints."¹ They had all hastened to him on his arrest: and some are still with him in prison. Mark also is drawn to his side (Col. iv. 10); and who would be surprised to see among Paul's companions and counsellors the veteran Philip and his four prophetess-daughters? Put these three together in special consultation—Mark with his knowledge of the best and friendliest part of the Jewish Christian Church, Luke with his intimate knowledge of the Gentile Churches, and Philip with his way-worn

¹ Seven of these deputies are named in Acts xx. 4. But two included in the "we" of the story there, are never named in Acts: Luke and Titus. Four of them are still with Paul when the Imprisonment Epistles were written—Col. i. 1, iv. 7, 10, 14; Philem. 1, 23, 24: namely Luke, Timothy, Aristarchus and Tychicus. The nine had come in pairs from Paul's Gentile Churches (two pairs from the wide field of Macedonia), except for the Churches of Achaia, who sent only Titus. If one reckons that one of each pair (and Titus) were early sent to tell their respective churches what had happened, these four of the original deputies would be left with Paul in Cæsarea, and would be mentioned in his letters from prison. (See p. 251 f. for full discussion.)

wisdom and stories of the earliest Christian days (add Timothy)—put these together with Paul, and listen to them discussing all these circumstances. All these circumstances, situations and consultations are facts—cannot but be so.

THE INFERENCE

What inference is to be drawn from these facts? What do Paul and his friends decide in these circumstances? To do nothing—to let matters drift? Nay, they cannot do that! They agree that something must be done to inform the Roman mind in preparation for hearing the pleadings in court. They see that the only thing to do is to prepare a historical statement, making the facts of the whole situation clear: for it is impossible, in open court and with the time at disposal there, to convey to the mind of the court what these facts are. They may hope to get the friendly assistance of an intermediary who will submit such a document to the proper eyes for reading it—a difficult thing if he is not, or has not, a friend at court; easy, if otherwise.

The statement will have to be absolutely unchallengeable in its recorded facts; for it is sure to be scrutinized, its facts will cause inquiry. It must be attractive to a reader, so that he shall read it through, once he has begun. It must anticipate likely questions

raised in the trial, and answer them—not by arguing against the other side, but by narrating facts only, on which, when the opportunity comes, an argument may be based. And it must be so Christian a document that it shall preach the Gospel from beginning to end; for, failing in this, it will ill succeed, even though it secures Paul's release.

The story of the Founder and of the founding of the faith will be necessary. The story of the Founder is already in writing, in more forms than one. A copy of one of the Gospels should be put forthwith into the hands of the hoped-for friend at court—Luke's Gospel, by preference, because it is written for Gentiles by a Gentile.¹ And who better than Luke can write such Christian Church history as Paul's case demands? Mark and Philip and Paul himself can provide him with all the facts as to the earlier parts of the history; he himself knows all the rest as well as any man. When the friend at court has been found, who will make the Gospel story known, and when the final trial is seen to be approaching, this explanatory statement, with the facts that tell, will be put into his hands; so that, having read the Gospel, the reader will easily and at once follow the statement, and form an intelligent judgment.

Now has all this unduly strained the

¹ That Luke's Gospel was written thus early will appear later (p. 100 ff.).

imagination? Or shall we be told that we should never have imagined all this if we had not first formed an opinion as to the plan of Acts and its purpose? As a matter of fact, it was the other way about. Imagining what must have happened when it was resolved to appeal to Cæsar first led us to wonder if Acts might not be the document: then its plan, its specially selected narratives, and its manner of execution seemed to answer that so it was. It is, however, enough for our present purpose to claim that, so far from the probable decision of Paul and his friends at Cæsarea (or at Rome) being against the theory that Acts was a preparation for the trial, if by any chance they thought of *this particular way*, it would have been adopted. Chance, did we say? Was not Paul there, and Luke himself, and others better able to think of a way-out than we? And is it common sense for *us* to say that they might *by chance* have thought of forming so exactly suitable an instrument? They were the very men to think of it, to plan it, to produce it.

CHAPTER V

THE PART PLAYED BY THEOPHILUS

IT does not very much matter who Theophilus was, if we can form a reasonably clear idea of the part he was expected to play and the use to which we may put him in seeking to interpret the meaning of what was written specially for him.

Nevertheless it is natural to ask who he was. He was a man of equestrian rank, a Roman knight, for he was entitled to be addressed as "most excellent." Whether he was pure Roman, or Jewish Roman, he was a Roman citizen, not improbably known personally, or by reputation, to the Apostle Paul. Was he the Theophilus who in Paul's time got the length of being High Priest, and may have had an open mind to the Christian Faith?¹ Was he the Theophilus with whom corresponded Seneca, that famous Roman courtier contemporary with Paul, and a man who certainly had access to the Emperor, more especially to Poppæa the favourite of Cæsar, herself a Jewish proselyte and friend of Jews in Rome? Or was he just a Roman knight who favoured Christians and had

¹ See Hastings' Dict. of the Apostolic Church—Art. "Theophilus."

access to Imperial circles? Or, indeed, were Luke's Theophilus and Seneca's Theophilus (for Seneca's seventh letter is addressed to one of this name) and Theophilus the High Priest really one and the same person? Perhaps. Who knows? At any rate he was a man who knew his way about the Roman court—as is permissible to think.

The opening sentences of Luke's Gospel, first four verses, are addressed to him in such dignified style as to contrast sharply with all that follows, though the same author composed the whole. The contrast is consistent with the idea that the Gospel was already a finished work, and *a copy of it* was specially addressed to him in these words. But also in the words of verse four there is very definite indication that before the Gospel and the Acts were sent to him he had already had instruction by word of mouth.

It has been commonly understood that the word used by Luke here, in speaking of previous instruction received by Theophilus (*katēchéthēs*—Luke i. 4) implies some such oral instruction as would be given to candidates for Church membership. No doubt to the Christian Church of a later time (though still "early" to us) Luke's using of this word suggested such a meaning. But it is more than doubtful whether so early as Paul's day "catechumen" was so used. This verb of Luke's was in common use among Greek-speaking people for instructing by word of

mouth; and it would be the inevitable word for him to use if he meant that in consultations already entered upon Theophilus had received verbal explanations and instructions concerning the plan to be adopted in Paul's defence, if not indeed verbal instructions for his direct and formal defence in the Roman law-court. When these conversations took place he had been promised the necessary information about Jesus (The Gospel), which would soon be sent to him because it was already a written history, and also about the Christian Church so far as Paul's case was concerned (Acts), which would be prepared with all possible haste.

The Gospel (of Luke), being originally meant for the general instruction of newly-founded Gentile Churches, contains much purely Christian ethical teaching for all readers. But the Acts (of Luke), being originally histories intended to illuminate questions arising in a legal case, contains a minimum of this kind of teaching. As already remarked in previous discussions, it omits a multitude of facts which it would certainly have contained if it had been prepared for the spiritual instruction of either prospective Church members, or members requiring further spiritual instruction. Therefore, though the Gospel might have been put into the hand of Theophilus for fuller spiritual instruction, as if he were a prospective Christian or a Christian needing fuller spiritual teaching, it was

certainly not for this reason that Acts was put into his hand. Acts indeed was written for such as wanted to know a great deal about the earliest Christian Church, of a very precise nature; but not for such as desired to be better informed Christians. We cannot escape from the conclusion that the Gospel was put into the hand of Theophilus for the same reason as was the Acts—to give him all the information about the Founder of the Christian faith that he would find necessary for his purpose or for the purpose of those to whom he would present the facts. In Paul's day the Roman advocate was considered essential in the supreme law-courts, and, though the Apostle Paul hoped to speak for himself as the Holy Spirit should give him utterance, he knew how important a thing it was to have a Roman lawyer argue such questions of Roman law as his trial would raise.

One hesitates between thinking that Theophilus was chosen as the go-between in an effort to put the facts of the case before members of the Court and Cæsar himself before the trial came on, or, on the other hand, as the go-between in instructing thoroughly reliable legal experts concerned to defend the Apostle, if indeed he was not to be the advocate himself; for the Roman advocate was often of the highest rank.

At any rate we have found sufficient reason to conclude that one main intention

in the preparing of Acts was that Paul's case should not suffer through lack of information as to the real situation of affairs and as to special points likely to be the subject of inquiry. It was therefore, as already pointed out, a first consideration with the writer that as far as in him lay the history should be unassailably accurate and so clearly intelligible as to leave no room for doubt.

The result of much earnest and honest research in very recent years is that scholarship has now not the least hesitation in believing that Acts, as we have it, is not the production of a clever writer, or of clever writers, describing events long after they happened and freely using a biassed imagination in writing them, but history by the hand of a contemporary and of first-class order. All the attacks on it, mostly the envious attempts of infidelity to subvert its testimony, and all the apologetic excuses for it, mostly ill-assorted interpretations of well-meaning patronage to defend it, have been together utterly put to shame. In the countries traversed by the book facts long lost to memory have been leaping to the light from ancient inscriptions, until now there is hardly a scholar but admits the unchallengeable quality of its history. The man that wrote it knew that it would have to stand the scrutiny of as keen critics as can in our own day address themselves to its examination. The life of a friend was at

stake, and he spared no pains to leave to the best-informed hostile scrutator not a single hook to hang by. Such was the instrument placed in the hand of Theophilus.

THE USE OF THEOPHILUS NOW

The use to which we ourselves may put Theophilus is very simple, and very effective when properly applied. The book was meant to be read in the first instance by *him*, not by Christian readers of that age or any other. In interpreting the histories in Acts a first question must always be "What did Theophilus understand by this, or that?" And if one cannot always be sure what Theophilus understood by this saying, or that other, one can nearly always check a false interpretation, however alluring it may be from one's own ecclesiastical point of view, by reflecting that Theophilus at least could not so have understood it. If the reader will apply this principle of interpretation in a few cases of disputed interpretation in Acts, he will be surprised (if he never tried it before) with the altered face of things.

Of course, Theophilus *may* have been chosen for the rôle assigned to him because he was known to have not only sympathy with Gentile Christianity, but also an acquaintance with the religions concerned in Paul's trial. He certainly seems to get credit for knowing a good deal about Jewish customs

and the like, for they are seldom explained to him. But this feature must not be too much stressed, because Acts confines itself to facts as they will emerge in the trial and avoids complicating affairs by so narrating them that explanations will be little likely to be asked. So do all readers find it to-day, as then. Accordingly we have to guard against interpretations which to the ordinary reader do not spring from the book itself or from any contemporary facts relevant and revealing, but in reality are the biassed, though quite honest, conceptions of a later Christian age and way of thinking.

Traditional Christian interpretation has indeed to be jealously questioned, even though the originators of such interpretations were many centuries nearer the time dealt with than we are. A Christian exegete writing three hundred years after Christ is in no better a position to judge Luke's meaning than one writing sixteen hundred years later. Each has to make himself familiar with the environment of the events he deals with: must get back to the times of Christ and the Apostles by studying the available literature of those times, before he can hope to follow the workings of the mind to which Luke addressed those writings. To give serious weight to Christian interpretations of centuries later is to shut the eye to the too-well proved futility and fatality of many traditions that became conventional or fashionable

in the Christian Church without any worthy recommendation in truth.

When Christian scholarship undertook to understand thoroughly the Greek and Roman mind, as well as the Jewish and Christian, of those first days of the Faith, it promised to confer, as it has by growing fitness for the task actually conferred, a great gift of light upon our Christian Scriptures. And we dare say now that if an interpretation of Acts can hardly have occurred to Theophilus, as classical knowledge is bound to conceive him, it can hardly be the meaning intended by Luke, and is therefore not to be entertained.

This same question, "What would Theophilus have understood?", had it been applied, would have saved the Christian Church from not a few errors which it can hardly consent to give up now. We shall apply the question to one or two examples, to illustrate what we mean.

I. *The Story of Pentecost.* Did Theophilus understand, when he read this story, that there actually appeared tongues of fire and was heard the noise of a tempest? Luke says that the "tongues" distributed among that Christian company were "*as of fire*"; and the "*ēchos*" (sigh) that was heard was "*as of a strong wind or breath.*" Theophilus would not be tempted to assert anything but what Luke says—namely, "*as of fire*"—fiery, fervent—in short "*fervent speech*"; and "*as of a strong wind*"—*a deep sigh or*

“*sough.*” The author saved Theophilus from understanding anything more, by introducing the word “as.” But Christian imagination closed the eye to this precaution, and still delights in the vision of actual fire and actual wind-rush. But what *did* Theophilus understand? That the fervent utterances of those worshipping Christians attracted a crowd, and that their intense earnestness expressed itself in inarticulate breathings of such combined volume as to resemble to the listener the sigh of a strong wind. So deeply were they stirred and moved. If this is what Luke meant to suggest, Theophilus would say he had done it in a way brief, dramatic, vivid and effective.

2. What did Theophilus understand by the exclamation of the crowd, “How hear we, every man in his own tongue, wherein we were born?”—ii. 8. He could not for even a moment have thought that speaking in many foreign languages was meant; for he knew, concerning all those mentioned as coming from various parts of the Roman Empire, that the Greek tongue was the tongue in which all of them were born. He would at once conclude that this language was not the language that should have been used in temple-worship; that probably the old Hebrew was still the sacred language employed there. He could not but conclude therefore that so deeply moved and stirred were these Christians that they used the tongue of their childhood to voice their deep

emotions and lofty aspirations. And that would be why sticklers for temple-decorum were so indignant, saying, "Are they not all Galilæans, and therefore abler than most of us to speak sufficient Hebrew for worship? Are they drunk, or crazy?" It was the indignation of cold formality at warm simplicity and earnestness in the house of God. Theophilus saw it all quite well, because he never was in danger of imagining that foreign languages were meant. Yet arose there a race of interpreters that did not hear with Theophilus' ears, and found a physical miracle where Luke meant a spiritual one; and to this day we have to reckon with the miracle of foreign languages here, to accept it with whatever misgiving or to deny it at our peril! Theophilus is very useful, if only he is allowed to speak.

3. Take an example of another kind—the *persecution after Stephen's death*. What did Theophilus understand when he read that the disciples were driven from Jerusalem "except the Apostles"? Certainly he would notice that Luke in a single sentence, and brief at that, indicated a very extensive expulsion of Christians from Jerusalem, but this saving phrase "except the Apostles" would at once intimate that *they* were not involved with Stephen in the teaching that so inflamed Jewish wrath, nor would their followers be: that on Stephen's death all his disciples were the object of persecution: and

that the Apostles, not having supported Stephen, were with their adherents allowed to remain in the city unmolested. But Christian imagination has formed a very different conception. Theophilus, however, reading on, would find himself right, because presently he finds that the Christian Church in Jerusalem goes on growing exceedingly. Why did Christian interpretation so differ? Because Christians grew to look for the more marvellous (namely, in this case, that some special Divine intervention shielded the Apostles), while Theophilus had no such temptation, and understood just what he read.

4. "*The way.*" What did Theophilus understand by Saul of Tarsus getting powers to persecute people of "the way"? Christian interpretation has settled down to the idea that the way of the Twelve Apostles was meant. Theophilus could not have imagined such a thing. The Apostles and their teaching were not involved in the persecution. It was, he understood, Stephen's way. Accordingly when, after conversion, Saul is described preaching Christ at Damascus, he concludes that Saul is preaching what Peter preached (ix. 20): but when "after many days" he finds Saul's life threatened both in Damascus and in Jerusalem, he concludes without doubt that Saul is now preaching what he before persecuted—Stephen's way. As a matter of fact Luke leaves Theophilus

to that conclusion, without expressly saying how his preaching so differed from Peter's that his life was in danger while Peter's was not: but before the book closes Theophilus learns that it was for preaching to Gentiles that Saul's life was in danger both at Damascus and at Jerusalem (xxvi. 17-19).

5. *Altered texts.* Instances of a kind of temptation from which Theophilus was not likely to have suffered when he first read Acts, are found in conflicting readings in early manuscripts of Acts. For example, the reading "Hellenists" (Grecians) in Acts xi. 20, though attested by the best ancient manuscripts, was changed by some early copyist to "Hellenes" (Greeks), evidently with the desire to correct what seemed a mistake. Luke says that the first Christian missionaries to Antioch preached "to Jews only," but afterwards came others who preached to "Hellenists also," meaning *others than Jews*. Now in *Palestine* Hellenists (Grecians) were Jews who spoke Greek, and others than Jews were Hellenes (Greeks). The first copyist who made the "emendation" took a Christian interpreter's privilege because in his opinion, if the first preachers preached "to Jews only" the second preachers had also preached to Jews only, if they preached to Hellenists. He changed the word to Hellenes, meaning others than Jews (of course, speaking Greek). Now if this copyist had asked, "What would Theophilus have

understood? " he would probably have left the word standing; for Theophilus must have understood that in Antioch there would be no distinction between Hebrew Jews and Hellenist Jews; they were *all* "*Jews*" *together*, and that Hellenists were Greek-speaking Gentiles, opposed probably to Latins, of whom there were many in Antioch. Luke, like the good historian he was, used the terminology of Antioch itself.

6. Another curious example of altered text makes us reflect that Theophilus would have had no temptation to alter what he found written. It is in xviii. 17. The oldest and best manuscripts have it that at Corinth "they" (the Jews) beat their own synagogue ruler Sosthenes, when Gallio rejected their charges against Paul. But a Christian interpreter, reckoning it incredible that the Jews would beat their own synagogue ruler, changed "they" into "the Greeks," and it became an accepted text as being so much more probable. Now what did Theophilus understand when he read that the Jews beat their own ruler? What but that they dare not beat Paul, a Roman citizen so befriended of Gallio, and beat their own ruler in order to create such a riot as might dispose Gallio to eject Paul (the known cause of their wrath) from the city for the sake of the public peace—the old trick employed in Galatia. Theophilus knew quite well what riots were usually got up for. *He* had no need to

emend the text! The good Christian interpreter who did emend it, did so, like many moderns, on a theory of his own which yet was wrong.

Perhaps in no period since Acts was written has the instinct of Christian scholarship more freely used the liberty of emending Scripture texts to please some passing sense of "probability" than during the last two or three generations. Impatience of obscurity strikes short-lived matches freely, when a little reflection such as "Would Theophilus have seen the need of this emendation?" would stay the hand till the dawn of better light.

Let these illustrations suffice to indicate what we mean by saying that Theophilus may be very useful to the modern interpreter, if he is properly used. There is great advantage in trying to put one's self into the position of the man to whom Acts was addressed and for whom (unlike the Gospel) it was specially written, and thus seeing through his eyes, reading with his mind, as Luke meant his book to be seen and read. It is, however, to be repeated that, since we cannot always be sure what Theophilus understood, the result is oftener negative than positive—in the sense that we can oftener be sure what he could *not* have thought than what he did think. This is true of the more spiritual meanings of the record, for we do not know what religious sympathy or training Theophilus had. At the same time there are

not many passages in Acts that demand of Theophilus, or of us, very deep spiritual convictions or conceptions. The one great problem which sets Theophilus wondering and desiring to know better, as it sets us, is "What is being filled with the Holy Spirit?" Theophilus had read the Gospel and the promise of Jesus that the Father will grant the Spirit to them that ask; and it may be that he, like ourselves, sought the solution on his knees, and found it.

Finally we may ask what Theophilus thought of Acts as an instrument for the proper presentation of the facts of vital importance to Paul's case. Surely it was that a more suitable answer at law for Paul the prisoner could hardly have been submitted. Nor could he have wondered very much that no Jews from Jerusalem dared to show face, whether a second time in Cæsarea or in Rome, as accusers of the Apostle. If they had any inkling that such a document had been written, as very likely they had, Theophilus would very much have wondered at their coming. For these men knew very well that if the facts were known to the Romans there would be for them only confusion of face, and no little risk. They were quick to use the dagger of envy and accusation, but quite as quick to run to cover at the first opposing gleam of the sword of truth.

CHAPTER VI

THINGS THAT FOLLOW

IF Acts is acknowledged on its own internal evidence to have been planned and prepared for Paul's trial, certain definite and far-reaching consequences, in respect of critical conclusions and historical interpretations, immediately follow.

(1) *As to Date of the Acts and the Gospels.*

The date of the writing of Acts is absolutely fixed as not later than the close of Paul's imprisonment in Rome, that is, not later than A.D. 61.

Although for several generations prevailing scholarship had been indulging in many and very divergent speculations which had one idea in common—that the date was much later—yet in recent years there has been a strong reaction from this trend of thought towards the view that the book must have been written before A.D. 70, the date of the fall of Jerusalem. The conviction had been deepening, and calling for expression, that it must have been written in an atmosphere very unlike that prevailing any time after this date. There are, it is true, a few considerable scholars impatient of this reaction, unable to appreciate a difference of atmosphere,

and adhering to those speculations regardless of any historical confusion caused by them. Our argument from the structure of the book, the precision of its plan and the peculiarities of its execution, is therefore a reinforcement of the view that, after all, the earliest possible date is the right one, namely, the date of the last event recorded in it.

But there are not a few scholars who have a further view, that, no matter when or by whom the book was written, it must have been seriously interfered with by later hands, so that its substance and intention are gravely altered. They contend that, if not late authors, at least late editors (some more late than others) made such omissions and additions, or emendations, as to compromise greatly the historical value of the book. Now, if one thing more than another stands out clearly from the plan of Acts and the way it is carried out, as we have found them, it is that there can have been no alteration on an appreciable scale since it was first conceived and worked out. The feeling is that one mind, or (if you will) several minds working simultaneously as one, with one ruling object, and at one time, thought out this plan down to its every detail; that the book is of that peculiar form which offers no opportunity for late authors using new sources, or for late and still later editors, with critical or interpretational axes of their own to grind, offering to improve the whole. In

short, the form of Acts is an insuperable barrier to all such speculations.

This feature of the book offers a presumption that the speculations regarding other New Testament histories, being essentially the same in character as those regarding Acts, are equally open to rebuke. But as to the date of the Gospels, apart from the alleged meddling of late emendators, there can be no question that both Luke's and Mark's are of date prior to Acts, since Luke's was addressed to Theophilus before Acts was, and Mark's was in Luke's hand when he wrote his own Gospel—not only before Acts, but several years before it.

That Luke's Gospel was written before Acts was even thought of is attested by the fact that this Gospel was in circulation among Paul's Gentile Churches long before the Apostle's arrest in Jerusalem (p. 106 f.). That Mark's was written before Luke's is proved by the fact that most of the former is incorporated in the latter. Let us discuss this matter for a little.

The fact that two of our Gospel writers, Mark and Luke, were closely associated with Paul in his ministry to Gentiles is an invitation to think of them as using their literary skill as fellow-workers with him; and there is good reason for insisting that it was for his familiarity with, and skill in, Christian Scriptures that Mark was asked to join Paul and Barnabas in the first mission to Galatia;

for he went with them in the character of *hypēretēs* (translated "minister").¹ Now this word *hypēretēs* occurs twice in Luke's Gospel, i. 2 and iv. 20. In the one case Luke speaks of the persons from whom he had derived information as "eyewitnesses and *ministers of the Word*"; and in the other case he calls the person who had charge of the Scriptures in the synagogue of Nazareth and to whom Jesus, having read a portion, handed back the Scripture, the *minister*. The word is also used in Paul's own account of his conversion (Acts xxvi. 16), where he is spoken of as a "minister, and witness" of the things he had seen; and in 1 Cor. iv. 1 he and others are referred to as "ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." In both these passages "minister" is one entrusted with Gospel facts, whether as "witness" or "steward." One gathers that this word *hypēretēs*, which for want of a better English equivalent is translated "minister," is in Luke's mind a technical term for one in charge of the Scriptures; and that Mark was chosen as "minister" in the Galatian mission because he had the Gospel in writing and could read from it in the Churches that Paul and Barnabas hoped to found. Not this only, but also he would be expected to produce, for the use of these Churches, copies of both the Christian Scriptures and those Jewish Scriptures in Greek which it

¹ Acts xiii. 5.

was a chief object for all synagogues to possess. For Paul was a practical missionary and knew the value of education. He would consider Scriptures indispensable to a young Church, separated (as he had every reason to expect) from the local Jewish synagogue. He would seek to provide all such churches with copies of the Jewish Scriptures and such Christian writings as were then available. He would have been expecting Mark to supply both, as "attendant" on the mission for that purpose.

Whensoever, therefore, or howsoever the idea first arose that these Gospels were not in use so early in Christian history as the time when Paul and Barnabas were at work together, the idea has no encouragement from Luke's reference to Mark in Acts. Moreover, who has not felt how unsatisfactory have been the evidences offered for dates of the Gospels, especially the Synoptics, which pushed them back from the days when the Christian faith began to take, and to keep, hold of great masses of men—the earliest days of the Faith?

"The Apostles' Teaching" in Jerusalem, including their account of the sayings and doings of the Lord, during the seventeen years till the Galatian Mission opened, had no doubt become a stereotyped oral tradition; but it could not fail in those days of skill in writing to become almost at once a written tradition also. Luke informed Theophilus

(Luke i. 1-4) that *many* before himself had reduced the story of Jesus to writing; and there is not the slightest reason to think that Mark was not one of them; in fact we know that he was, for Luke makes so large a use of his Gospel. Nor can we hesitate to believe that it was because of his Gospel that Mark was chosen to accompany the Apostles of the Gentiles as their "minister" of the Word.

One remembers what opportunities Paul had had of estimating that "usefulness for the ministry" in Mark which long afterwards he was still remembering and hoping to employ when his own mouth was closed (2 Tim. iv. 11). For Mark's mother had a house in Jerusalem and was a near relative of Barnabas. The Twelve had frequented her house; at least Peter did, for thither on his escape from Herod's prison he went for conference with Christian friends before further flight. Barnabas had previously found asylum for Paul in Jerusalem after the flight from Damascus; and ten years later he had Paul for companion when they came to the city with the famine gift from Antioch. We can hardly be wrong, therefore, in concluding that Paul knew Mark very well, through Barnabas and in that house, and had learned to value both Mark himself as a writer and his Gospel as a Christian witness.

Nor does there seem any reason why Paul could not have used Mark's Gospel in his

Syria-Cilician ministry, long before the Galatian Mission; for Barnabas and Paul were not likely to drop all correspondence during the decade that followed the cementing of their friendship in Jerusalem. Whatever Gospel writings were at the time available, these the exiled preacher, who had not been himself an "eyewitness" of the Saviour's life and work, would diligently gather. And whence would they more likely pass into his hand than from his friend Barnabas at the Christian centre? The silence of Acts on all such matters we have already learned to understand. What it does not say does not forbid the thought; what it does say about Mark certainly encourages it.

Mark, however, disappointed Paul by abandoning the missionaries before they reached their objective in Galatia. Why, we are not told. But, though it is a favourite critical observation that "Acts knows nothing of the Gospels," who doubts that its author knew about them most intimately? Who would care to deny that when Mark left the Mission he left in the Apostles' hands copies of such Scriptures as he had?

Did Luke already possess Mark's Gospel, or did he only now make use of it? In other words, when could Luke have begun to write his Gospel—a Gospel for the use of Gentile Churches by the hand of a Gentile? Certainly we shall look in vain in the book of Acts for an answer. The author of that

book, who never mentions his own name or that of his brother Titus (2 Cor. viii. 18), would be the last man to offer information. But as to when he *could* have done it, we are not to be influenced by the common idea that he had not become a Christian, or a Christian writer, till the time when the "We" passages in Acts begin, namely, in Paul's next missionary tour to Macedonia, etc.

Why should it be doubted that Luke, like Titus, was a convert and an attendant on Paul long before this—in the Syria-Cilician Mission, for example? Titus was Paul's attendant when he went up with Barnabas to Jerusalem with the famine gift (Gal. ii. 1). Paul would have close and devoted attendants in the Syria-Cilician Mission as afterwards, men devoted to the Gentile Gospel, and men like these, when once he had them, he kept with him. Even Mark, a Jewish Christian, notwithstanding the temporary desertion, is found cleaving to him in prison days (Col. iv. 10).

Be all this as it may, we know that Luke, a born historian and collector of material, put himself at Paul's service, and wrote his Gospel for the Churches of the Gentiles, the Syria-Cilician and Galatian Churches no doubt being those most pressingly in need of it; for, nine or ten years after the first Galatian Mission, Paul speaks of him as one whose praise is in all the Churches on account of

his Gospel.¹ Luke's Gospel had thus been familiar to the Churches of the Gentiles long before Paul's arrest took place, being used by them to the same purpose as it is used to-day all the world over.

It was a copy of this Gospel which, as already said, was addressed by a preface to Theophilus; but it is of some interest to note in passing that there is in one of its early clauses an interesting suggestion as to whom the writer had prepared it for. Luke's Gospel has for its first Christian date the fact that Quirinius was "hegemon" in Syria (*i. e.* general commanding the Roman forces engaged in putting down rebel forces in the Taurus region, near both Tarsus and Galatia)—that Quirinius was "hegemon" in Syria in the year in which Jesus was born. In so beginning his Gospel story he recalls to his first readers, as the date of our Lord's birth, a date most familiar and memorable to all Syrians and Galatians (B.C. 6-5).

Returning to the date of the writing of Luke's Gospel itself, we may note that a favourite objection to a date so early as we suppose, is that the description of the fall of Jerusalem (in A.D. 70) must have been penned

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 16-18. In the 16th verse Paul is referring to Titus; and then proceeds to say, "Along with him I am sending his brother whose praise is in all the churches *in the Gospel*." *In*, in a multitude of N.T. cases means "on account of." It was a very early tradition that this brother was Luke, the Gospel-writer. There is no reason to think otherwise.

after the event. If this were so, then the words were put into our Lord's lips by the author, or his "source"; and this makes the whole history suspect. How much more of the Gospel story is put into our Lord's lips without truthful foundation? The bloom is off the peach! But the testimony of Acts to its own date, and therefore to the date of Luke's Gospel, demands that Christian criticism shall find some other explanation of our Lord's forecasting of the fall of Jerusalem. Criticism needs to tell us what it really thinks of Christ, when it argues as if he could not, or would not, have foreseen the ruin of Jerusalem. It is to be noted, however, that many competent critics are now agreed that there is really nothing more in these forecastings (that is, in the language and imagery of them) than is to be found in Old Testament passages easily recalled by our Lord's word reported in the Gospel.

Into the whole question of the dates of the Gospels, we do not further inquire. It is enough to point out the inevitable conclusion as to the early date of both Luke's Gospel and Mark's, if Acts was written not later than A.D. 61. It is for advocates of a later date to overcome the testimony of Acts.

(2) *As to the Silences of Acts.*

We have already referred briefly to this subject in discussing the Plan. It will bear fuller discussion. Because Acts "knows nothing," as the hackneyed phrase is, of an

alleged historical fact, it is too often argued that the author did not know it for a fact, and that therefore it may rightly be deemed not to be a fact. Imposing speculative edifices in criticism have been reared on foundations like this, or buttressed by such material in order to give them more semblance of strength. It is, however, proverbially precarious to rely for evidence on silence; and in the case of Acts it is tragically so, when its silence is misunderstood. For many of its silences, as we have found, are not only studied, extensive and profound, but also eloquent as to its purpose. By its reticence it has nothing to suggest on matters unconnected with its purpose or uncalled for in its histories. Its silence as to any particular fact can have significance only if the fact is such that clear reference to it was to be expected, and this again would be a fact somehow relevant to Paul's trial. The severely restricted scope of its history warns against hasty inferences from its omissions, either as to early Church history or as to the writer's knowledge of it. We must assume a vast deal known to him which he has deliberately left out; indeed it is extensive and intimate knowledge that can best discern what to leave out and what to include in any information supplied for a purpose.

All arguments from the silences or omissions in Acts that neglect this consideration are necessarily futile. When the question is con-

sidered—Would the narrating of such and such a fact have served the author's plan? or would he have reason for omitting all reference to it?—and when the conclusion is that had he known the fact he must have recorded it—only then may we doubt his knowledge of it, or claim that his silence argues it not a fact.

Thus the silence of Acts regarding the general expansion of Christianity in Paul's time does not in the least hinder us from imagining this expansion on a very large scale. It may have been colossal throughout the East, the South, and the West, without the fact being necessarily reported in Acts. And thus also its silence about the missionary activities of the Twelve means nothing. So also is it with Peter's ministry to the Gentiles after the Cornelius incident. For when the writer's plan is grasped, we see that it did not come within his prescribed limits to take any note of these things. He is not concerned to report the extension of Gentile Christianity any more than of Jewish. His ultimate concern is with Paul's work, and not even with all of that, or with more than the merest fraction of it. His business is confined to such Gentile work of Paul as will serve to illuminate legal questions arising in his trial. He has selected enough for the object in view, and all else he resolutely puts aside.

There is no need to elaborate this point. But it is of the utmost importance to recog-

nize it; for, when it is kept in mind, a great deal that passes for weighty criticism of the Early Church history we do possess will appear no weightier than a feather.

On the other hand, silence on facts *within* the author's limits, facts bound to come before Paul's judges, one way or another, mean a very great deal. What, for instance, is to be inferred from the author's silence as to the attitude of the Apostles to Stephen's views? He tells that the persecution did not affect them, but he is silent as to any such efforts to defend Stephen's life as were made to defend Paul's three years later. This silence awakens echoes! The author thought the truth would create an unfavourable impression and that he should say nothing till he could report truthfully (as he could do later on) that with fuller light the Jerusalem Apostles came to be of the same mind as Paul.

It may be objected that the Apostolic agreement, at the famine visit of Paul and Barnabas with Peter, John and James, was an incident of great importance in Paul's favour; yet there is no reference to it in Acts. But there is excellent reason for the omission. It was private. Acts deals only with facts known to the public and open to scrutiny; and besides the revealing of it in Paul's interest *now*, at the time of the trial, might be very much against the interests of Peter and his fellow-Apostles in Jerusalem.

after the event. If this were so, then the words were put into our Lord's lips by the author, or his "source"; and this makes the whole history suspect. How much more of the Gospel story is put into our Lord's lips without truthful foundation? The bloom is off the peach! But the testimony of Acts to its own date, and therefore to the date of Luke's Gospel, demands that Christian criticism shall find some other explanation of our Lord's forecasting of the fall of Jerusalem. Criticism needs to tell us what it really thinks of Christ, when it argues as if he could not, or would not, have foreseen the ruin of Jerusalem. It is to be noted, however, that many competent critics are now agreed that there is really nothing more in these forecastings (that is, in the language and imagery of them) than is to be found in Old Testament passages easily recalled by our Lord's word reported in the Gospel.

Into the whole question of the dates of the Gospels, we do not further inquire. It is enough to point out the inevitable conclusion as to the early date of both Luke's Gospel and Mark's, if Acts was written not later than A.D. 61. It is for advocates of a later date to overcome the testimony of Acts.

(2) *As to the Silences of Acts.*

We have already referred briefly to this subject in discussing the Plan. It will bear fuller discussion. Because Acts "knows nothing," as the hackneyed phrase is, of an

alleged historical fact, it is too often argued that the author did not know it for a fact, and that therefore it may rightly be deemed not to be a fact. Imposing speculative edifices in criticism have been reared on foundations like this, or buttressed by such material in order to give them more semblance of strength. It is, however, proverbially precarious to rely for evidence on silence; and in the case of Acts it is tragically so, when its silence is misunderstood. For many of its silences, as we have found, are not only studied, extensive and profound, but also eloquent as to its purpose. By its reticence it has nothing to suggest on matters unconnected with its purpose or uncalled for in its histories. Its silence as to any particular fact can have significance only if the fact is such that clear reference to it was to be expected, and this again would be a fact somehow relevant to Paul's trial. The severely restricted scope of its history warns against hasty inferences from its omissions, either as to early Church history or as to the writer's knowledge of it. We must assume a vast deal known to him which he has deliberately left out; indeed it is extensive and intimate knowledge that can best discern what to leave out and what to include in any information supplied for a purpose.

All arguments from the silences or omissions in Acts that neglect this consideration are necessarily futile. When the question is con-

sidered—Would the narrating of such and such a fact have served the author's plan? or would he have reason for omitting all reference to it?—and when the conclusion is that had he known the fact he must have recorded it—only then may we doubt his knowledge of it, or claim that his silence argues it not a fact.

Thus the silence of Acts regarding the general expansion of Christianity in Paul's time does not in the least hinder us from imagining this expansion on a very large scale. It may have been colossal throughout the East, the South, and the West, without the fact being necessarily reported in Acts. And thus also its silence about the missionary activities of the Twelve means nothing. So also is it with Peter's ministry to the Gentiles after the Cornelius incident. For when the writer's plan is grasped, we see that it did not come within his prescribed limits to take any note of these things. He is not concerned to report the extension of Gentile Christianity any more than of Jewish. His ultimate concern is with Paul's work, and not even with all of that, or with more than the merest fraction of it. His business is confined to such Gentile work of Paul as will serve to illuminate legal questions arising in his trial. He has selected enough for the object in view, and all else he resolutely puts aside.

There is no need to elaborate this point. But it is of the utmost importance to recog-

nize it; for, when it is kept in mind, a great deal that passes for weighty criticism of the Early Church history we do possess will appear no weightier than a feather.

On the other hand, silence on facts *within* the author's limits, facts bound to come before Paul's judges, one way or another, mean a very great deal. What, for instance, is to be inferred from the author's silence as to the attitude of the Apostles to Stephen's views? He tells that the persecution did not affect them, but he is silent as to any such efforts to defend Stephen's life as were made to defend Paul's three years later. This silence awakens echoes! The author thought the truth would create an unfavourable impression and that he should say nothing till he could report truthfully (as he could do later on) that with fuller light the Jerusalem Apostles came to be of the same mind as Paul.

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Their position had become full of risk; for to be a Christian was now again charged as a crime.

Thus, one might say, *within* his own limits the author of Acts, when silent, is speaking with thrilling tone; but *outside* his own limits, when silent, he means nothing at all! Criticism must know whether its inquiry is within or without the author's prescribed limits before it can draw an inference from his omissions of fact.

(3) *As to the Early Expansion of Christianity.*

This very narrowness of the limits of Acts invites the mind to a wider use of the imagination than would otherwise be possible, in thinking what was the actual measure and manner of the early spread of the Christian Faith.

Even if it is granted that no early Apostle made such headway with the Evangel as Paul did (an assumption at the best), yet the individual members of the Twelve and the earliest adherents of the Faith cannot have gone on for many years "beginning at Jerusalem." They must have achieved results in other fields of Gospel enterprise to which Acts makes not the faintest reference. The book does indeed indicate that a flourishing Church continued and multiplied in Jerusalem, with Peter, John and James (till his martyrdom) for resident Apostles. And every section-ending speaks of growth, progress, expansion of the Church and its message,

within an ever-increasing radius north and north-west from that city. But it leaves the rest to the imagination and forbids it not.

The repetition in some measure of scenes like the first Christian Pentecost, year by year, in Jerusalem may be supposed. The rising of Gentile Churches as well as Jewish in the wide provinces of the Empire is not likely to have been postponed because Paul had been so successful in his particular part of the field. Many would imitate his example. In those thirty years (think what thirty years of a modern Christian Mission may mean!) the Christian Church, being so largely Jewish and already trained in Old Testament Scriptures, and having added to their faith in Jehovah faith in Jesus Christ, must have made great progress in territories other than the Mediterranean margin traversed by Paul. The Black Sea border, where lived the Christians addressed in 1 Peter, and the trade-routes from Rome, north, south, east and west, from the Atlantic to the Indus, from Europe to Ethiopia, from island to island, wherever the Jewish trader carried the Scriptures and the traditions of his race, would share in the blessed advent. It would not always be with the same permanent rooting and prolific fruiting that the Church enjoyed nearer the centre of the circle; but it would be always potentially living.

Not many of the first Christian missionaries would have the salient gifts of Peter or of

Paul. More would rank with Barnabas, Philip, Mark, Luke, Apollos. Many more would serve like Prisca, Lydia, Crescens and the rest. But all had the same impulse, the same faith in Jesus Christ. And this was the mighty thing that won its way to the heart of a waiting world, though we cannot trace the history of its progress—the earliest wide extension of the Christian Faith.

It is not without significance that Acts, though it had made no attempt to describe how it came about, records that in Thessalonica, twenty years after the Resurrection, the complaint was that the Christian Gospel had “turned the world upside down,” that is, the Roman world. It was working like a ferment in the minds of mankind. Every great feast in Jerusalem during those years had been bringing pilgrims from the ends of that world with stories of sprouting seed-plots of the faith from seeds brought thither by pilgrims from the Temple in years gone by.

Nor must we hesitate to surmise that there may be a great deal more genuine Christian history (if only we knew how to read it) in some of those extant records of the time which are not canonically recognized. These do not indeed conform to the pattern of Acts. Few religious histories come near to this masterpiece of literary skill; certainly those early Christian writings do not. But the reason is obvious—they had not for authors such masters of style; and (which is more

important) they were not written for so select a class of readers and with a purpose so exacting as to determine both their manner and their measure. Nevertheless the book of Acts does not refuse them speech within their own province.

(4) *As to Early Church Life, Doctrine and Administration.*

If Acts was written for the restricted purpose we suppose, we should not expect to find in it any picture whatever of the domestic life of early Christian Churches, or any statement of Early Church theology, or any account of Church administration, beyond what was necessary to expiscate the truth about Paul and his religion. Sidelights we may get on the progressive Life, Creed, or Organization of the Church; but more we cannot expect; and no more do we get. Acts is a very fragmentary directory on these matters. The Epistles are more communicative. These latter lend here and there effective aid in the interpretation of Acts; while Acts gives help in explaining references to the faith and life of the Church made in the Epistles. But the broad fact remains that Acts yields no more such help than would be looked for in a document primarily intended for readers not concerned in the least to understand the Church's life and creed.

This being so, it follows that the attempt to confine our ideals of the life, the creed,

and the constitution of the Christian Church within lines suggested by the book of Acts cannot but result in inadequacies, imperfections and aberrations seriously hurtful in many respects. This New Testament history was never meant to control the expression of the living power of the Holy Spirit within the Church for all ages to come. It was never intended that the "forms" recognizable in it should never be improved upon, or others substituted as need arose. They but indicate how in certain sets of circumstances Christian folk, moved by the Holy Spirit, expressed themselves; and to that extent they do afford a safe guide—an encouragement to yield to the Spirit of truth and love, in all Christian self-expression.

So far as forms of procedure in the early Church are expressly disclosed and commended in Acts, they ought to be a guide for the Church of to-day. But so far as these are wanting, the modern Church still finds a guidance there, by taking the cue from the way the first Christians yielded to the leading of the Spirit in their conclaves. As they advanced, so the Church will always advance while it is alive. As we hope to move from glory to glory by the Spirit, so should we move from form to form, from symbol to symbol, from organization to organization in all our Christian activities, holding not only by the faith in Christ, but also by the fellowship of the Spirit.

(5) *As to Re-construing New Testament History.*

If Acts is admitted to have been planned and written for Paul's trial, criticism will have, in light of this fact, not only to re-interpret the history on the points we have now discussed, but will have to re-construe the story of the early Church as a whole. The interpretations that found acceptance when this view of Acts was not in the mind, will in many details, and in some important matters, have to be re-cast. It would require a large space in which to show the whole re-construing. But we may put side by side a few of the necessary modifications, even though most of them may have already been foreshadowed.

We shall not be able to assume, as has been common, that preaching to Gentiles began with Paul, or with Peter; or that Paul's ministry to Gentiles began with his collaboration with Barnabas; or that "Turning to the Gentiles" first took place at Pisidian Antioch; or view Paul's work detailed in Acts as anything more than the merest fragment of his life-work, or the merest glance at a labour of tremendous extent and energy. We may not assume, for example, that what is related in Sections VI and VII of Acts about Paul's missionary labours in founding and nourishing the Churches of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia, gives anything like a picture of the fruitful Gospel work carried

on during these twelve or thirteen years, the kind of work and results of it that gave so great joy to the Church at Syrian Antioch when Paul and Barnabas reported concerning the first mission to Galatia. We may not even assume that in the three years' work at Ephesus there was no opposition till the Uproar, that it was up to that time plain sailing, with no riots, no threats of legal action; for, having given examples of riot in the Galatian story and of legal action in the Macedonian and Achaian, the author has sufficiently illustrated for his reader the *kind* of opposition that Paul had to meet, not by any means all of it. Events that serve this purpose have called for detailed and vivid narrative, but the far more important events that illustrate the progress of the Church of the Faith are either passed over altogether or suggested by a brief sentence here and there. It is the brief pregnant sentence that requires the more patient study if the facts are to be even dimly recovered.

Often there is not even a reference to the really constructive work of upbuilding the kingdom of God for years at a time. For example, Sections IV and V deal with a period of years, some twelve or thirteen, and yet detail only a few pictures of events that in the sum total occupied but a few days; and during that period not a word is said of Paul's strenuous Gentile work in Syria-Cilicia. To recover some idea of that work and place

it in its proper chronological place in Church history requires reflection and imagination.

While we are barred thus from assuming that in Acts we have a continuous and articulated history of the Christian Church, we are invited, nay, compelled, to employ the historical imagination on such hints as we have, often with excellent aid from the Epistles and often with none, by giving greater heed to those short connecting sentences or passages that bridge between its selected narratives. The long account of a short-lived hour was important in view of Paul's trial: but the short reference to spiritual progress during a long period is more important in an effort to recall the picture of the growing infant Church of the earliest days.

This does not mean that free speculation is to be encouraged. Legitimate speculation is never free; it must honour the checks to its freedom. The Epistles offer a continual hindrance to excessive licence in explaining Acts; in many directions they offer positive resistance, which can be removed from the headstrong interpreter's path by no other method than tossing them aside—a method too much resorted to. No interpreter has a right to assume what is inconsistent with the plain meaning of Acts or of an Epistle; but, on the other hand, the interpreter who will conserve consistency with these, may encourage his imagination from what other

sources are available, in order to conceive the Christian history of those first thirty years.

This same plain meaning of Acts will seem one thing to one student and another to another, according to the view he takes of the purpose the author had in writing, and the consequent reasons he had for relating fully or sparingly, emphatically or casually, any particular event. So that all these reflections, herein written down, will be found largely aimless to one who has not first satisfied himself as to the implications of the plan and execution of the book. Our own dream is of some one with the necessary equipment in scholarship and imagination, both under good control, grasping with a firmer hold than we the full significance of Luke's plan and purpose in writing Acts, and presenting to the Christian student of the future a fresh interpretation of New Testament Church history.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST THIRTY-THREE YEARS

WE have said that it is a dream of ours that some one abler than we, having mastered the Plan of Acts and its implications, will one day re-interpret New Testament Church history in such a way as to make altogether unnecessary a resorting to the conflicting and confusing speculations which in recent years have jumbled that history, affording neither clear light nor sure leading, and giving the enemy occasion to blaspheme. But we are to offer, in brief skeleton form, *the lines* on which, from our own point of view, such a re-interpretation might well proceed.

Remembering always the limited object of our chief source of historical information and reading between the lines—that is, between the selected narratives of Acts—we may be able to see a different meaning in the whole history of that book from that which has been commonly seen, a meaning consistent with all other known history of the period and one which shall not offend the minds of thoughtful students of the Word. It would require a very large volume to set forth the whole history in detail with the necessary explications; and we are to confine ourselves to the

broad, historical view of connected events, here and there lingering on incidents that seem to have been misunderstood, minimized, or even overlooked.

We shall divide the history into sections corresponding with the eight sections of Acts; for although within the sections the author does not pretend always to adhere to strict chronological order, the sections themselves deal with periods that are in such order; so that in passing from section to section we shall be moving forwards in time. The early sections may cover but a few weeks, or months at most; but the later are to be reckoned in years approximately thus—(IV) three or four; (V) nine or ten; (VI) three or four; (VII) seven or eight; (VIII *A*) a few months; (VIII *B*) three or four years.

SECTION I

(Contemporary with Acts i. 1—ii. 47)

FOUNDING OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP

Having given His disciples many infallible proofs that He was alive, so that they had begun to think of Him as a living and abiding presence with them even when He might not appear in bodily form, the Lord Jesus assured

them that in Spirit He would be with them always, instructed them to be His witnesses to the world, and ceased to appear to their bodily eyes.

His appearances and disappearances from time to time during a period of forty days had accustomed their minds to the conception of a living presence very near to them though unseen. It was a comfort; not a terror, as all ideas of spirit nearness had hitherto been apt to be. He had made familiar to them a *fact*; and now he must challenge their *faith* by ceasing to appear to their bodily vision. It was expedient for them that He should thus "go away." They must now learn to depend on His spiritual presence solely. The Spirit would come to them, He said. The Spirit was to be their Comforter and their power.

Nevertheless, after His last appearance and disappearance (which they learned in time to think of as His being "taken up" to the right hand of God, and which we call the Ascension) they could not quite relinquish the hope that at any moment He would appear as before. In this they were like many a disciple in their day and in all days since then who misread the meaning of that final disappearing in the form of flesh—which was necessary that the coming of the Spirit might be with power. But they set themselves without delay to prepare for the witness-bearing He had commanded; and this they did by study of the Scriptures and by prayer.

For the Master at these recent interviews had opened up to them the Scriptures, so that they read with new understanding; and they remembered that He had been wont to say that the Heavenly Father gave the Spirit to them that asked. One first step they took after reflection on the Scriptures; they filled the vacant place of Judas, making up the sacred number of the Twelve. Meanwhile they continued steadfastly in prayer with fellow-believers for the coming of the Spirit.

Little more than a week had elapsed when the answer came. At Pentecost worshippers from all parts of the Roman world where Jews lived—the Dispersion—had gathered in the vast Temple courts in Jerusalem in groups around their chosen Rabbis, just as Jesus' disciples used to gather round Him; each company in its own familiar portico or cloister. The Apostles, Rabbis as they were to their own fellow-believers, were surrounded by a large gathering, intensely earnest and expectant for "His Coming." Suddenly, moved by no earthly impulse, their longing spirits found expression. A general sigh as of a strong wind arose among them, and presently they all burst forth into articulate speech voicing the praises of God—everyone with a gift he never had before—a fervent tongue unloosed. It was an unpremeditated, and certainly unusual way of expressing religious emotion in Temple worship. For it was a movement of the Holy Spirit.

But the only thing that the crowd, gathering from other cloisters around, seemed to notice was that these Nazarenes, though mostly Hebrews and better able than the mass of pilgrim worshippers to voice the praises of God in the sacred Hebrew tongue employed in Temple worship, were speaking in the common language of the people (namely Greek); whereat some were indignant and some contemptuous. What the Twelve felt, however, was a spiritual rapture, the more marvellous that it was shared by all their brethren "speaking with tongues." Here was the promise being fulfilled, a proof of the presence and power of their risen Lord. It was the coming of the Spirit. It was *His* coming in the Spirit.

Then came an inspiration to Peter. Surprised into newness of speech, he surprised all that heard him. He recalled the prophecy of Joel (ii. 28, 29) forecasting an outpouring of the Spirit when the days of the Messiah should come, and claimed that this event was its fulfilment. But not by such an argument could that crowd of Scripture-lovers be convinced. He had to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus. This he and the Twelve did, telling and re-telling the various appearances of the living Jesus after the Crucifixion, hour after hour of unpremeditated, unrehearsed and altogether unstaged witness, before a great assembly subdued into amazed attention. Whereupon Peter appealed to

another Scripture (Ps. xvi. 8-10) in which he found a picture of the Holy One not being left in the grave in hopeless corruption, and claimed that the Risen Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ. And further appealing to Psalm cx. 1, he proclaimed the faith that Jesus, having finally disappeared in bodily form, was "taken up" to God's right hand and now sent His Spirit to His trusting followers as they had seen. The assembly was now deeply impressed, spell-bound by the evidence of fact and the audacity of faith. The Spirit that moved these witnesses moved so mightily among their hearers that in that first day three thousand "received the word"—believed in Jesus as Christ, publicly acknowledged their faith by being baptized, and expected the abiding gift of the Holy Spirit.

The story in Acts emphasises only the Scripture foundation of the new faith because the author's purpose in telling the story required only so much. But in a single sentence he indicates that "with many other words" (than the Scripture arguments of Peter) was the appeal sent home. We can have no doubt that those "many other words" included the Apostles' witness to the resurrection of Jesus; for how could those thousands have been convinced of the applicability of the Scripture texts without this witness as to the fact of the resurrection?

This was how the Christian Church first took shape. The acceptance of the Nazarene

as Messiah was the only requisite for membership; and public baptism was the expression of it. Believers, being all Jews, became segregated by their faith in Jesus. They were a new sect within the Jewish Church, and "continued steadfastly" in the customs of Jewish sects. For they attended on their own Rabbis for instruction ("the Apostles' Teaching"); they organized among themselves for their own religious and social benefit ("the Fellowship"); they enjoyed the privilege, without espionage, of having common meals among themselves ("the Breaking of Bread from house to house"); and they shared in the general observance of public worship in both Temple and Synagogue ("the prayers") ii. 42-47. Thus was their fellowship formally evolved without violent change of religious habit.

The three thousand converts of that first day were added to day by day as the weeks passed. So the closing sentence of the first section in Acts testifies, before the first interference of official opposition is narrated. This opposition forms the subject of our next chapter; but how long it was before wrath was roused to action we are left to guess. It cannot have been long, a few weeks in the summer of 29 A.D. (the year of the Crucifixion). The crowd of Pentecost pilgrims had for the most part left for their far scattered homes in the Dispersion (which we may call the Roman world of that day).

Whoever will conceive early Church history on lines true to fact and unforbidden by Acts, must regard those home-going pilgrims as carrying, within a few months, to synagogues over a world-wide area, the story of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus as well as the founding of the Church of the Christian faith. Many of them, no doubt, would tell the story with journalistic non-commitment; but others with the enthusiasm of convinced believers. So that, from the very first, on a wide field of enterprise, the faith took root in hundreds of centres, just as we happen in Acts to get a glimpse of its having taken root in Damascus and Antioch. The first far-flung seed of the faith had already taken root throughout the Roman Empire before the year of the Crucifixion was nearly ended.

SECTION II

(Contemporary with Acts iii. 1—v. 16)

FIRST OPPOSITION BY JEWISH AUTHORITIES

The officials of the Jewish Church, from being angry with the Christian sect for honouring the name of Jesus as Christ since they themselves had dishonoured His name, became alarmed at the growing number of the Christians and the growing public indignation

against themselves as the instigators of His death. An event causing more than usual public feeling was the healing of a cripple by means of Peter and John, and the consequent listening of the Temple crowd to Peter's explanation of how the cure was effected—not by the Apostles' power but by the Name of Jesus Christ through their faith in the Name. Peter seized the opportunity of interest thus stimulated in the minds of many belonging to other sects who had grown accustomed to seeing the Christian sect in congregation without troubling to draw near and listen. He and the other Apostles now repeated their witness to the Resurrection, and Peter continued his arguments from Scripture that Jesus was the Christ. The account in Acts selects from his address his identifying of Jesus with "the suffering Servant" of Isaiah, "the Holy and Just One," "the Prophet like unto Moses"; and his holding up of the Risen Jesus as "the Prince of Life," in Whom if his hearers trusted there would come "the Restoration of All Things" foretold by Isaiah, and the fulfilling to them of "the Promise to Abraham" that "in his seed (the Messiah) would all nations be blessed." Only, said Peter (for it was a Jewish audience he addressed), "To you first hath God sent His servant to bless you." Thus does the writer of the Acts preserve Peter's argument and appeal in so far as it was of importance for his purpose in writing. But we have to conceive

that with the Scripture argument went the Apostles' convincing witness to the fact that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead.

The members of the Jewish Council (led no doubt by the Sadducees to whom Resurrection as a fact was impossible) had Peter and John arrested, secured in prison, and the next day brought before them. The Council in the exercise of its acknowledged authority vigorously banned the new Name and grievously threatened the preachers of it. But these preachers were now moved by a mightier Spirit than could be cowed by the State Council of their nation; they claimed that they must hearken to God before hearkening to men. With which they were allowed to return "to their own company," whom they found in great anxiety, and with whom they joined in prayer for courage to cleave to their testimony. They had a wonderful answer in the assurance of the Divine presence; so that they continued "speaking the word of God with boldness."

The Christian sect had in these days been steadily organizing in fellowship. They were so conscious of the necessity of adhering to the faith and to one another that "they had all things in common." The Common Fund was administered by the Apostles, who having themselves "neither silver nor gold" had to be supported from it. But they had their own peculiar contribution to give for the common benefit—their indispensable witness

to the Resurrection. The temptation of members to make false profession of devotion to the common interest was checked by the tragic fate of Ananias and Sapphira, Peter's dealings with whom gave him added authority in the fellowship.

Indeed so greatly did Peter's influence extend that the people believed in his very shadow as a means of curing disease, and the fame of him brought people from surrounding places into Jerusalem to share in the general benefit. For the cures effected were famed abroad.

SECTION III

(Contemporary with Acts v. 17—vi. 7)

TOLERATION OF CHRISTIAN SECT IN JERUSALEM

Not many months had passed since the founding of the Christian Faith and Fellowship, when the Jewish officials (Sadducees mainly) could stand the growing influence of the Faith no longer. They must crush the whole movement. They arrested the Twelve, arraigned them before the Council, charged them with disregarding its express commands not to preach the Name, and proposed capital punishment. But the Pharisee party in the Council, many of them now convinced Christians themselves and all of them resenting

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(Contemporary with Acts v. 17—vi. 7)

TOLERATION OF CHRISTIAN SECT IN JERUSALEM

Not many months had passed since the founding of the Christian Faith and Fellowship, when the Jewish officials (Sadducees mainly) could stand the growing influence of the Faith no longer. They must crush the whole movement. They arrested the Twelve, arraigned them before the Council, charged them with disregarding its express commands not to preach the Name, and proposed capital punishment. But the Pharisee party in the Council, many of them now convinced Christians themselves and all of them resenting

the Sadducees' attempt to get an official pronouncement carried in the Council against the doctrine of resurrection, formed a strong opposition to the persecutors of the Faith. Led by Gamaliel, they carried a motion so simple and natural that its true significance in the history of early Christianity has been largely overlooked. It meant the toleration of the Christian sect within the Jewish Church. From that day onward throughout the whole period covered by the book of Acts this finding of the National State Council of the Jews remained unaltered, even (so far as we can gather) during Herod's short reign and persecution.

This fact has clearly to be understood before events, otherwise difficult to explain, occurring in later years, can be properly conceived. The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were reckoned a constituent part of the Jewish State Church, recognized and protected by their National Council. They were free to enjoy all the privileges enjoyed by other sects; but they were as well bound as these by the Jewish Church regulations and the authority of the Council. The practices already commenced by them as a sect were officially allowed, and the Faith by which they cohered as a sect was reckoned permissible within the Jewish Church.

By this one must understand that from the very first the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem had no thought of differing from other sects

in religious practices such as Temple Worship and the ritual of the Law, although already, for many generations, Jews in the Dispersion had allowed most of these practices to become obsolete, with connivance of the Jerusalem authorities. The first Christians were willing and eager to do in Jerusalem as Jews in Jerusalem did. They were, therefore, with their own consent subject to the regulations of the Jewish Church in the Holy City. They had liberty for the faith in Jesus Christ and for their own fellowship, *within* the faith of Israel and the fellowship of Jews.

Furthermore, it has to be remembered in studying the later story of the Christian Church of the period that the Apostles had ever to keep in mind that there was a grave political as well as a religious question involved. Roman law permitted to Jews their ancient religion, but denied to them any new one except the Imperial; and therefore it was supremely important that not connection only but actual incorporation with the legal Jewish Church should be preserved. Moreover, even if Rome did not interfere, they had good reason to expect that if they separated themselves from the Jewish Church in religious practice, a great door and effectual (in Jerusalem at least) would be promptly shut against the preaching of the Gospel. All this Theophilus would quite understand as he read the story in Acts. Just as he perceived the importance of Peter's argument from Scrip-

ture, so did he note the meaning of this practical toleration in Jerusalem of the Christian sect by the Supreme Court of the Jewish State.

Tolerated so far, the Apostles made the most of their opportunities. The Christians in Jerusalem multiplied rapidly and organized themselves. But relief from external opposition gave room for internal dissension. Their fellowship was disturbed by a dispute about widows' grants from the Common Fund. There were two classes of Christians in the city—"Hebrews," who were mainly Jews of Jerusalem and Palestine, speaking Aramaic; and Grecians, who were mainly Jews of the Dispersion, speaking Greek. The Grecians complained that their widows benefited less from the fund than the Hebrew widows. The Apostles, the almoners of the fund, at once resigned in favour of a committee of seven to be elected by the whole body of Christians, being resolved in future to attend only to purely spiritual service. "The Seven" elected had Greek names and seem to have been Grecians, from which fact it would appear that the Grecian Christians at that time in Jerusalem outnumbered the Hebrew Christians. The Apostles probably had not anticipated such a "clean sweep"; but they would loyally accept the result.

The original three thousand converts at the first Christian Pentecost, notwithstanding that many of them were pilgrims who soon returned

to their distant homes, had by this time evidently increased to many thousands more in Jerusalem during the months that had passed. For otherwise the Apostles would have had little difficulty in knowing personally the Grecian widows and their needs, as well as the Hebrew. The former would greatly outnumber the latter; and indeed the numbers had so very greatly increased that the efficient administration of the fund demanded more time and thought than the Apostles could give to it. But, apart from this, there was such a difference in their sympathies and in their ways of living and thinking, even in religious fellowship, between Grecians and Hebrews, that they had not become completely assimilated by their common faith. The Grecians for the most part were not born in Jerusalem or Palestine and had for generations been accustomed to worship the God of their fathers apart from the restrictions of Temple worship and the rigours of ritual, to which the Hebrews clung with invincible zeal. This was true of Grecians and Hebrews as distinct classes among the Jews, whether Christian or non-Christian. The dispute about widows' grants may appear a trifling difficulty, easily surmounted; but it was a prelude to much wider differences in the Christian fellowship which taxed the resources of Apostolic grace to the utmost.

It is at this point in his history that the author of Acts, closing his third section, adds

in a single sentence that, as far as Jerusalem was concerned, the Christian Church continued to flourish exceedingly and in process of time many of the priestly class became Christians. With this remark he closes his account of the Church in the Holy City (except for the incident that opens his next section); and we shall have to watch for every incidental side-light to conceive what the history of the Jerusalem Christian Church for the next thirty years must have been.

Thirty years; because for several reasons we must conclude that not more than three years have yet passed since the Christian Church took rise. A single year may very well suffice for the events we have seen taking place; for all the events known to us are of the kind that in the then atmosphere of Jerusalem were more likely to have occurred sooner than later in the history of the Christians. Of this we shall speak later; meanwhile let us remind ourselves that already in many distant cities of the Empire the Faith had taken root as vigorously as in Jerusalem; for indeed there had been less stubborn influences to stifle its growth. The news of the opposition of the Sanhedrin had been carried abroad, with the news also that it had been of no avail to muzzle the intrepid confessors of the Faith; and the only hindrance to swift growth had been the want of fully accredited details of the Apostles' teaching. Already there was a call for written accounts

of that teaching—the Gospel story; and it could not be long before, in that age of ample skill in writing, these would be prepared in answer to the call. Meantime, pilgrims from later feasts brought news of the toleration now accorded to the Apostles and their message; for there were at least three great feasts that drew fresh Jews to Jerusalem every year, some from every great city at one of these occasions or another.

SECTION IV

(Contemporary with Acts vi. 8—ix. 31)

CHRISTIAN DIVERGENCES FROM JEWISH CHURCH PRACTICE

The Grecians of the Dispersion being, as already said, more familiar than the Hebrews of Palestine with Synagogue worship apart from Temple association, and being less addicted than these to strict observance of the ritual of the Law, could easily conceive sincere Christian worship without either. They could wish for it the more because for the majority of Jews abroad in the Dispersion such worship alone was possible. They spoke of this in their own Synagogues in Jerusalem; they acted on the principle they thus claimed as justifiable. Fewer and still fewer of the

Grecian Christians frequented the Temple at the conventional hours of worship. This led to controversy, to upbraiding from their Hebrew brethren; but they could easily find in the history of Israel ample justification for insisting that neither Temple nor Law was necessary for the worship of God. Hebrew Christians, with the Apostles at their head, could not accept those views. Tradition and habit bound them to both Temple and Law, and right well did the Apostles know that if they did not act in this matter as Jesus himself acted when He was with them in the flesh, they would alienate beyond recovery the Jewish Council and lose the grand advantage of evangelizing the thousands of their countrymen that came and went at feast times.

But the controversy was keen in those synagogues, broad-minded churchmen on one side, narrow-minded on the other. These latter came at length to the white heat of ungovernable passion, and soon the Sadducean chief priests got wind of it, and saw a chance to drive a wedge 'twixt Hebrew and Grecian, between conservative and liberal, in the Christian community. They raised the cry "Our Temple and our Law in danger!" Stephen, the leading spirit in contending for freedom in worship, one of "the Seven" and a man full of the Christian spirit, was arrested and accused before the Council. He defended his position by an appeal to the Scriptures, recalling thence how much there was of believ-

ing worship by God's servants before either Temple or Law was heard of, and how the prophets worshipped in faith when there was no Temple within their reach. But it was all in vain. The atmosphere was charged with electric passion. Stephen was condemned and stoned to death. For the Jewish Council must regulate the religion of the Holy City in the interests of the Jewish State, and the decision was that both Temple and Law were necessary in the national worship.

So it came to pass that the Apostles and their Hebrew followers formed a conception of how truly a Christian may be a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and yet make a great political blunder. They grieved over Stephen's death even as they had grieved over his views, but hardly yet had they got so far as to grieve at not being able to agree with him. In the state of public feeling, they could only stay within doors at home or in the Temple, and pray for help and light. No Christian Jew dared even to give Stephen's body reverent burial; that was left to "devout persons," Gentile believers who were not eligible for the Jewish fellowship, and were therefore under the authority not of the Jewish Council but of the Roman governor.

One man, Saul of Tarsus, a young ruler, a Pharisee of Gamaliel's school and no more intolerant of the Apostles' teaching than Gamaliel himself, took an active part in hounding the martyr to trial and to death, because,

being "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," he found the new teaching of Stephen made him "exceeding mad" against him and all his disciples. The stoning of Stephen to death had been entrusted to his zealous and capable hands; and he now led a merciless assault upon all the martyr's followers, beginning that very day, killing where he could, but expelling from the city all and sundry of them. But he did not molest the Apostles, nor, of course, their adherents.

When Theophilus read the story of all this in Acts, he understood the situation perfectly well. The author knew that he would; though all he read was that the persecution fell upon all Christians "except the Apostles." He knew that Hebrews in Jerusalem (Christian as well as non-Christian) would be against Stephen; and that Grecians (non-Christian as well as Christian) would be divided, though probably most of them would be in his favour. The vote in the Council would be an overwhelming Hebrew vote. He saw, too, that the Christian Hebrews, led by the Apostles, could not honestly support Stephen's views; and that, even if they could have acquiesced in them, only disaster to the Christian cause in Jerusalem could follow if the privilege of State recognition was lost to them.

In truth when Stephen moved for freedom in Christian worship regardless of the State, the Apostles were satisfied with the restrictions necessarily involved in State connection

so long as their own conscience was free. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was the first to suffer for non-conformity. But, to his followers, persecution did not mean disruption of the Christian Church; it meant only a disruption of Church and State. On the other hand, to the Twelve and their disciples it did mean, not so much a disruption of Church and State, as the more grievous disruption of the Church of Christ; and from that day the Apostles missed no good opportunity of trying to undo the evil of it—but always consistently holding to the unquestionable benefit of State connection. A general non-conformity like Stephen's would have shut a Gospel door that otherwise stood generously open.

The persecution, fomented by the authority of the Jewish State and conducted with relentless vigour by Saul of Tarsus, lasted for a considerable time. Saul himself in his regenerate days speaks of it as having extended to "strange cities." That would be wherever Rome permitted Jewish authority to control the Jewish community in big cities of the empire, and from these he was empowered to hale Christian men and women to death in the Jewish national authority's name. For in many cities of the Empire, as already noted, Christian communities had been gathering since the beginning: all of them no doubt at first of the Apostles' way; but many of them now definitely of Stephen's way and offering

asylum everywhere to refugees from the Jerusalem persecution. These were the objects of the bloody inquisition headed by Saul of Tarsus.

Most of them, no doubt, succeeded in evading the persecutor, seeking safety where the Jewish writ did not run. Philip, Stephen's colleague in the Seven, did so—in Samaria; and there he carried on the evangel of the grace of God. There followed a great movement towards Jesus Christ among the Samaritans, such an ingathering to the Faith that when the Apostles in Jerusalem heard of it they sent Peter and John to Samaria, and the result was a great outpouring of the Spirit in its cities and a wider opening of the door for the Gospel; into which these two Apostles freely entered. Philip also was honoured with leading the Ethiopian Eunuch into the Christian fellowship, urged mightily thereto by the same Spirit that had called himself into the same.

Thus began a wider divergence from Jerusalem practice than Stephen's: for neither Samaritans nor eunuchs were, under the Law, permitted to be members of the Jewish Church. Yet Peter and John, who dared not disregard Jerusalem practice in Jerusalem, did openly disregard it outside the city where the Jewish Council had no authority; and in no very long time in all Samaria the Christian Church had taken fast root. For it was no business of the Jewish Council to interfere

with the teaching of Christian sects outside their jurisdiction, and besides they did not yet care whether Samaritans were Christians or not.

Meanwhile events of much deeper significance were taking place, or had already taken place, much farther from Jerusalem than Samaria—namely at Damascus, in whose synagogue Christians not only of the Apostles' way but also of the persecuted way had found asylum. The arch-inquisitor Saul, on the road thither to arrest those of the way, was himself arrested by light from heaven and the call of Jesus Christ. Thrice is his conversion described in Acts; for it was the conversion of the persecutor into the preacher—preacher to Gentiles too, as it afterwards transpired. Saul's conversion involved the discovery of a truth that neither Stephen nor Philip had apparently conceived; for reformers have ever their own limits in their ideals of reform. Saul, in accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour, saw in Him the Messianic hope for all nations, Jew and Gentile, as proclaimed in Scripture. When Ananias, a "devout man," that is, a Gentile believer,¹ to whom Saul submitted himself for baptism, pointed out to him that after so signal a revelation of the risen Lord as he had got, his duty would be to preach Jesus Christ to

¹ "A devout man according to the law" (xxii. 12) means a proselyte, like Nicolas of Antioch, one of the Seven.

“Gentiles and kings,” Saul was “not disobedient to the heavenly vision.”

At first in Damascus he was content to preach Jesus as the Christ to Jews in the Synagogue. But after retirement in Arabia, during which the widest way of the Gospel—the Gospel for all sinners of mankind—became a settled conviction and burden on his soul, he returned to Damascus and preached so differently from what he did before that a very different reception awaited him. Though he gathered disciples of *his own* (as Acts ix. 25 describes them, meaning disciples not of the Apostles’ type) his life was in danger. Leading Jews prevailed on the Governor of the city to order his arrest. But his disciples effected his escape, for, he says (2 Cor. xi. 32, 33), “in Damascus the governor under Aretas the king guarded the city of the Damascenes in order to take me; and through a window was I let down in a basket by the wall, and escaped his hands.” Thence he made his way to Jerusalem to consult with Peter. This was three years after his conversion.

He would fain have persuaded Peter, and James the Lord’s brother—the only Apostles to be met with in the city (Gal. i. 19)—to throw open the Gospel door to all peoples, Jews and Gentiles alike. But the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem would not consort with the man who compassed Stephen’s death for a small offence and now invited them to

take all the risks of an offence against Jewish Church sentiment so very much greater. To them he was "no disciple," not one of their kind.

Barnabas, however, had faith in him; but spoke for him in vain. Whereupon Saul must even lay himself upon the same altar as Stephen did and preach in the synagogues a gospel capable of creating far keener passion than Stephen's. His friends had much ado to secure his safety. They pleaded with him not to annoy Jews, especially Christian Jews, with a message meant for Gentiles, but to go where he would have a Gentile audience. Praying in the Temple he had a vision confirming this (xxii. 21): he must "go far hence to the Gentiles." So he left Jerusalem and went to his native Tarsus, where awaited his immediate entry the most strenuous and probably the most fruitful labour of his life.

It might be four or more years since Stephen's death, though only three since Saul's conversion. During these years the Christian Church in Jerusalem, now largely confined to Hebrew Jews but in constant touch with pilgrim Jews from all parts of the empire, went on increasing. Jerusalem was being steadily Christianized; for the friendlier part (the Pharisees) were more numerous than the hostile part (the Sadducees). Meanwhile in far-off centres a like increase was taking place. The seed that could take root in Samaria had room and power of growth much farther afield.

The closing sentence of the fourth section of Acts, speaking of the field with which the section has to do, says that "throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria" the Church spread strongly. So could it, and did it, in many other directions. When Saul reached Jerusalem from Damascus the only one of the Twelve he found there was Peter. The rest, answering calls for their witness to the Resurrection from awakening Synagogues, had gone to all points of the compass—to Judæa, Samaria and Galilee; to Arabia and as far as Babylon; to the southern margin of the Mediterranean, Egypt and Lybia and Cyrene; to Cyprus; to every land whence the call came to each. For the King's business required haste, far-travelling and unremitting. We shall not read of many of the Twelve being in Jerusalem again. They found too absorbing work to do elsewhere. Their work may be unrecorded by a pen like Luke's, but the fruits of it in many lands were to be seen and gathered by future generations.

Wherever the several Apostles and their multiplying assistants went, they found what Saul found in Damascus—they found truth-seeking Gentiles knocking at the door for admission into the Christian fellowship, having already for themselves entered into the Christian faith. The other Apostles could no more wait for the lead of Peter than could Saul. They would proceed as they were guided by the Holy Spirit, which waits on no man's prejudices or hesitations. The history

expressly provided for us shows how the Spirit constrained Stephen, Philip, Saul, to follow the light. And this is but to say that the same Spirit constrained all the Apostles and their companions; and that from these isolated parts of early Church history we are to conceive the whole, with no grudging imagination but with unfettered reason, generously and adequately. There was no doubt a permanent political hindrance to expansion, apart from the Jewish synagogue—the Roman law with regard to religion *licita* or *illicita* (permissible or not permissible). But knowledge of how the difficulty was overcome in one place would be speedily known in another; for Jewish communication was probably the best organized in the Empire in those days. It needed not years—but only a few months—for the news of Christian progress to reach the confines of “the world,” and to reverberate in news of ready imitation.

SECTION V

(*Contemporary with Acts ix. 32—xii. 24, Gal. i. 22—ii. 14, and 2 Cor. xi. 22—31*)

THE WIDEST DIFFERENCE FROM JEWISH CHURCH PRACTICE

The events of the period dealt with in the fifth section of Acts are found not only in that

section but also in the first two chapters of Paul's letter to the Galatians (Gal. i. 22—ii. 14).

Now it is necessary to agree as to the date of this letter, before we can proceed. It cannot have been written after the Christian Council of Jerusalem had settled the circumcision question. Otherwise two things would not have happened: (1) Paul would not have omitted all reference to the "Decrees," since they dealt with the very subject of the letter; and (2) he would not have referred to the Jerusalem Apostles as he does in ii. 6 if he had in his possession the "Decrees" which spoke so handsomely of himself and Barnabas, and also settled the controversy in the way he himself, as shown in the letter, most desired. He wrote the letter in ignorance of what the Christian leaders in Jerusalem would say or do regarding the circumcision claim. Accordingly the letter, being written before the Council but after the return from the first mission to Galatia, must be of date A.D. 48. Therefore also all its narrated events must be prior to that date.

It follows that the second visit of Paul to meet the Apostles in Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 1—10) was the famine visit of A.D. 45. It also follows that Paul withstood Peter to the face at Antioch within this same period. But at what precise date was this? Was it (1) when Paul and Barnabas were co-working "a whole year," A.D. 43, 44; or (2) when they had just

returned from the famine visit and were about to set out on the Galatian mission in A.D. 46; or (3) when they had just returned from the mission—the very time the letter was written, A.D. 48? Against (2) is the fact that they had just left Peter behind them in Jerusalem; and against (3) that they found Peter in Jerusalem when they went up to the Council meeting. It is very unlikely that Peter was in Antioch, therefore, in either A.D. 46 or 48. But there is a very great likelihood that he was in Antioch immediately before Herod's death, for he escaped from Herod's jurisdiction "to another place," and what place more likely than Antioch where his friend Barnabas at the moment was? This likelihood will be treated as a presumption in our setting of the history in this chapter.

There is another fact communicated by "Galatians" (i. 21 ff.)—Paul's ministry in Syria-Cilicia for some nine years.

Finally, the histories in Acts are not necessarily in chronological order. It is the author's way to put first the most important (that is, for his immediate object). He did so in the previous section. It is, of course, plain from the whole story that Stephen's martyrdom comes first in time. But Philip's work in Samaria and Judæa may have been before, during, or after, Paul's three years at Damascus. It is, however, possible to arrange the events of the present section in proper order of time, and with excellent increase of interest

in the history. The order in Acts is (a) Peter preaching to Gentiles at Cæsarea, etc. ; (b) The founding of the Gentile Church of Antioch, Paul and Barnabas in joint-ministry there, and their visit thence to Jerusalem; and (c) Herod's persecution, Peter's escape, and Herod's death.

Now the Antioch story (b) begins with the persecution after Stephen's death (A.D. 32) and ends with the famine visit (A.D. 45). Peter's escape and Herod's death synchronize with the joint-work of Barnabas and Saul at Antioch (A.D. 43, 44). At what point, then, in this period from A.D. 36 (when Paul left Jerusalem for Tarsus) to A.D. 46 (when he and Barnabas returned to Antioch from the famine visit) shall we place Peter's vision, his fellowship with Cornelius and the report of it to the Church in Jerusalem? The only mark of time occurs in the opening sentence of this fifth section (ix. 32) :—" And it came to pass, *as Peter went throughout all parts,*" etc. When had Peter left Jerusalem, at this period, so as to be thus on travel "in all parts," that is, at great distances? He had had to flee beyond Herod's jurisdiction and could not show himself near Cæsarea in Herod's lifetime. But Herod died in A.D. 44. These opening words indicate that Peter was on his way back to Jerusalem after Herod's death, when he had the vision that settled *for him* the Gentile question at last—shortly after (we conclude) he had left Barnabas and Saul at

Antioch. This view is the more likely because it intimates that Peter did not "dissemble" on the Gentile question at Antioch after the illumination he received in the vision at Joppa—in other words, that he was not guilty of the sin against the Holy Spirit which a different reading of this history has fixed upon him.

The purpose of the author of Acts in its fifth section is to give special prominence to the fact that, though the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem still continued rigidly to follow the practices of the Jewish Church as they were bound to do while they enjoyed the privileges of a recognized sect, they yet were constrained through the action of Peter and Barnabas to acquiesce in the reception outside Jerusalem of not only such Christians as were of Stephen's and Philip's school, but also Gentile Christians generally—the widest possible divergence from Jerusalem practice, but a divergence they did not practise in the Holy City itself. Had they done so, their days of toleration would have at once ended. Let us read the history of these ten years in the order of time in which events occurred.

Saul, departing from Jerusalem for Tarsus, left behind him in the city a strong community of Jewish Christians at whose head were Peter and James the Lord's brother (Gal. i. 19). None of them all, except perhaps Barnabas, was prepared publicly to sympathize with the gospel to Gentiles which now

he went forth to preach wherever a door among Gentiles might open to him. He was going "far hence to the Gentiles" (xxii. 17—21). He found an open door and a wide field for operation in the province of Syria-Cilicia. Starting from his native city Tarsus, in Cilicia, he evangelized the cities of the Mediterranean shore, all round the Levant, and southwards and eastwards in wider Syria. That the Gentile work in Syrian Antioch engaged much of his attention and labour during those nine years before Barnabas and he co-operated there, can there be the slightest doubt? But many other cities in the wide province of Syria-Cilicia he evangelized, and many Gentiles he gathered into the Christian faith and fellowship. The only reference to these in Acts is an incidental one, in the letter conveying "the Decrees" of the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem to Gentile Christians "in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia" (xv. 23). Without any question most of these converts were won during the nine years' ministry of Saul in the prime of his manhood. That Luke and Titus were fruits of this ministry is more than probable; and that from the date of their conversion these two brothers would be his devoted attendants can readily be concluded.

But the first Christian evangelists in Antioch had preached before Saul or any other preachers to Gentiles arrived. They were of those who had been scattered, as we

have already seen, to all parts of the Empire by Saul's persecution "about Stephen"; they belonged to the Phœnician coast, the island of Cyprus and Antioch itself, and had begun in Antioch, as early as Philip in Samaria, to preach Christ to Jews only and from Stephen's standpoint. After them, however, came believers from Cyprus and from Cyrene on the African coast, preaching to others besides Jews,—that is, to Gentiles—and their work led to the founding of a great Gentile Church in this vast city, which was next in magnitude to Rome itself. Thus early, and from North Africa, did the Gospel for the Gentiles sound forth; and it is an interesting probability that Saul, whether before he joined Barnabas or after, found himself forestalled in Antioch as a preacher to the Gentiles.

It is natural to ask whether, when this fruitful Gentile work was proceeding in Antioch and in the province of which it was the chief city, the Jewish synagogue was the meeting-place of all Christians. When Christians of Stephen's way were driven from Jerusalem, there was no atmosphere there for Gentile Christianity to breathe in, as Saul after his conversion had already found. But in Syria-Cilicia the atmosphere was favourable, as Saul must have expected when he set out thither; and there seems no reason to suppose that Christians of either type, Jewish or Gentile, could not worship in the

same synagogue, till either of two events occurred—either such an increase of Gentile Christians as demanded a separate meeting-house, or such opposition by Jews with like results as occurred at Damascus earlier and in the Galatian mission later. In Antioch the former event may have anticipated disturbance in the synagogue; but it can hardly be believed that in other cities of the province Saul had not the same experience as he had later in the provinces of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia, when from preaching in the Jewish synagogues he had to withdraw and “turn to the Gentiles” specially.

Paul, in 2 Cor. xi. 23—28, is led into a retrospect of his experiences during twenty-five years’ preaching to Gentiles. More than other Apostles had he laboured; oftener been in prison for the Gospel’s sake; more flogging at the hands of Jewish authorities (five times, and each time “forty stripes save one”) had he suffered; and oftener had he faced death. He mentions events, few of which can be identified from Acts—thrice beaten with rods (by Roman magistrates), once stoned (that is, at Lystra), thrice shipwrecked and once for a day and night “in the deep.” And as for dangers confronted in his many journeys, they came from almost every quarter—rivers and robbers, Jews and Gentiles, cities and desert and sea, and (subtlest of all) false brethren. Labouring and travailing, watching and fasting, hungering and thirsting, exposed to cold

and climate, had he gone on with his mission ; and amidst it all he had the daily anxiety of caring for all the churches he was the means of founding. It is a crowded picture, and much of it is drawn from memories of the Syria-Cilician ministry, which the author of Acts thought it best for his purpose to omit altogether. Some things at least are beyond doubt,—that many cities had been evangelized in this mission, many oppositions met, and many churches founded. These were the fore-runners of the wide and influential Syrian churches of the earliest centuries of the Faith.

All these fateful years he cannot be said to have been in fellowship with the Jewish Christian Church of Jerusalem. Yet one man in Jerusalem was his friend and deeply interested in his work. This was Barnabas. As church after church was founded and had to be provided for, the need of Scriptures must have been very pressing ; and this need must have led to continual correspondence between the two friends. Whatever written Gospels were now available in Jerusalem, they cannot have been withheld by Barnabas. He would rather employ every means to collect, prepare and forward them. If there had been no other reason for Mark (near kinsman of Barnabas, a skilful penman on the spot) writing what he gathered from the Apostles' lips in Jerusalem as to the life and words, the death and resurrection of Jesus, Saul's great need for a written Gospel and as

many copies of it as possible, was reason sufficient. Neither was Saul the man to do without it in so wide a work, nor was Barnabas the man to refuse this aid.

But the Christians in Jerusalem, after some seven or eight years of this work of Saul's had gone by, although the Jewish Christian Church had been during these same years lengthening its cords abroad and strengthening its stakes at home, now fell upon evil times. For Herod Agrippa I. had in A.D. 41 been made king in Jerusalem and soon after in practically all Palestine; and from the very first he had set himself to win over the Jews by slavish observance of their religious customs and lavish offerings to the Temple and its service, and soon ventured to claim their allegiance as the true Messiah of their race. As soon as he deemed it safe he began to persecute the Christians. By the year A.D. 43 many of them were driven from the city to seek refuge in distant cities abroad; but a devoted number, headed by some of the now highly honoured Apostles, stood their ground.

In these circumstances their attention was drawn to the great Christian movement in Antioch, the magnitude of which was sufficient to arrest any lurking despair as to the future of Christ's Church, and even to suggest that there a ready welcome might be found for the persecuted brethren. Barnabas, who through correspondence with Saul had probably more knowledge of the work in Antioch

than any other of them, was commissioned to visit Antioch personally and make inquiry. When he came thither and saw the work of the Holy Spirit, he was glad. He threw himself heart and soul into the work of preaching to Gentiles, but he longed for the co-operation of the experienced Saul. These great results, he reflected, had been achieved by the Gospel to the Gentiles which Jewish Christians in Jerusalem had all these years refused to recognize. He felt that the long alienation from Saul and his work must end. So he set out for Tarsus to get into touch with Saul, who eagerly responded to an invitation to act as colleague to this old friend in Antioch. In joint labour therefore for fully a year without intermission they gathered into the Christian fellowship many people : co-working of course with other evangelists on the spot.

Meantime in Jerusalem Herod had gone to an extreme length in persecution. He could not feel secure while the Apostles remained. He ventured the shedding of their blood. He killed James the brother of John, and having arrested Peter he held him in prison till an appointed day for his execution. But, divinely befriended, Peter escaped from prison and fled from Herod's territories "to another place." That place (we believe) was Antioch, where he knew his friend Barnabas to be; for there we find him when Barnabas and Saul are at work together (Gal. ii. 11—14).

Peter at Antioch had now free fellowship

with Gentile Christians, just as Barnabas had ; preached to Gentiles too ; and great were the crowds that gathered to hear " the Witness " of the chief of the Twelve. Great also was the joy of Saul ; for was it not now unity of spirit in the bond of peace ? But, alas, after no very long interval a dark cloud dimmed the blue of Saul's sky. Herod died at Cæsarea (A.D. 44) ; and immediately the outlook of the Jerusalem Church was changed. The hiding Christians in the city congregated under the presidency of James, the Lord's brother. They sent messengers to Antioch begging Peter to come back without delay. Never had there been so significant a judgment of God as had fallen on Herod, red-handed with the blood of the saints ; never before (said they) a wider door for the Gospel in Jerusalem. These messengers were Jews of the strict and exclusive type, implacably strict and exclusive towards Gentiles, Christian or non-Christian. They declined to have fellowship with the Antioch Christians ; they reminded Peter that to return to Jerusalem ceremonially unclean from contact with Gentiles, would be madness. He must not even make it possible for them to confess in Jerusalem that he had fallen into the ways of that renegade Saul of Tarsus !

Peter saw the difficulty only too clearly. He had done in Antioch as Antioch Christians did, having no choice. He must do in Jerusalem likewise, to save the situation there.

Thus only could he keep the Gospel door open and carry on the work that had been so signally blessed in spreading the knowledge of Jesus Christ throughout the Dispersion. So he withdrew from social intercourse with Antioch Christians; told Saul how sorry he was to do it, but there was no help for it. Barnabas felt the truth of this and admitted it, even discontinuing fellowship while Peter and the deputies were there. Saul, having now had these eight or nine years of freedom from all sense of moral or spiritual difficulty in this matter, "withstood Peter to the face because he was to be blamed." It rather startled Peter to be blamed when his intentions were altogether so good, his purpose so sincere. But Saul made him see the other side of the question, as he had never seen it before. "You have shown us all, the Gentiles in particular, that though you are a Jew it does not in the least harm you to live as do the Gentiles; and now you say you cannot regard them as Christian brethren unless they become as Jews—that without the deeds of the Law there is no salvation for them! Is there any sense in this? Is it by the works of the Law that a Jewish Christian is saved? Yes, or No!"

When Peter left Antioch in the company of the delegates he was not a happy man. He felt that he had done the right thing, but he felt that Saul had been right also. They were both right, each in his own sphere and at his

own work. Yet, after all, was not Saul more in the right in saying that justification is by faith and not by works of the Law? And were not those Antioch Christians entirely lovable and fine? It did seem hard to think of them as unclean and socially unfit, as he was required to think. Thus thinking he travelled as far as Lydda, and turned aside to do the Lord's work in that region; and at Joppa he had the vision which evermore abode with him, always saying, "What God hath cleansed make thou not common (or unclean)"—in other words, wherever in a Gentile you find faith in Jesus Christ you see a brother. The result was that Peter was led to preach to Gentiles at Cæsarea, receive them by baptism, and have that fellowship with them which he had refused at Antioch.

For this result, after the vision, he was so far prepared that he took the precaution, on going to meet Cornelius, to have Jewish Christian witnesses with him,¹ who should be able to tell the Church in Jerusalem what had happened. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit

¹ x. 23, xi. 12. Were these six brethren members of the deputation that had come "from James" to Antioch? Were they Peter's companions as he travelled back to Jerusalem? The Greek of the Received-Text would imply in x. 23 that these witnesses belonged to Joppa. But several excellent MSS., including D, omit the article which requires this rendering, so that the original had been "certain of the brethren accompanied him from Joppa," not "certain of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him."

and the gift of tongues vouchsafed to these Gentile believers, just as to the first Jewish Christians at Pentecost at the beginning, were the two impressive facts to which they gave witness, when (not long after the event) Peter had to defend his action in Jerusalem.

Peter at the bar of the General Assembly, or Representative Council, of his Church! What a significant event this was! "Who was I (said he) that I should withstand God?" Even his accusers, "they of the circumcision," who had hoped to secure the Church's condemnation of him for having fellowship (eating and drinking) with men uncircumcised, were reduced to silence. The fact was patent: "To the Gentiles also hath God granted eternal life." A grudging admission it was; yet it implied that now the door of the Gospel stood wide open to Gentiles. But it was only a pious concession; the door was open only in theory. In practice it remained as firmly closed as ever in the Holy City; for there it was a Jewish door, not a Christian one; for, had the Apostles and the Church there openly received the uncircumcised, the door of Gospel opportunity would have been immediately slammed in their faces; the privileges of a tolerated sect would have been denied to the Nazarenes, and the Christian community driven from the city. To keep the door open they must preserve their rights as Jewish citizens; and to do this they must conform to Jewish practice. Fellowship with

Gentiles abroad was practicable and desirable; but in Jerusalem it dared not be attempted. Nevertheless, here and now was the widest divergence of Christians from Jewish practice condoned and acquiesced in by the Jewish Christian Church—non-conformity justified in the eyes of conformity.

Immediately on these events there occurred a famine overspreading the Roman Empire which came to a height in Palestine in A.D. 45. About this time there came from Jerusalem certain "prophets" to the Christians in Antioch, one of whom named Agabus disclosed the state of destitution that must ensue among the poorer Christians in Jerusalem. Whereupon the Antioch Church taxed itself, "every man as he was able," to provide a relief fund for those suffering Jewish brethren, and sent it "to the Elders in Jerusalem by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

In the account of this event, in the letter to the Galatians (Gal. ii. 1—10), we learn that Saul resolved to accompany Barnabas for special reasons. He went "by revelation," that is, he was strongly convinced that in God's providence and by His will an opportunity had now arrived for a definite understanding with the Apostles in Jerusalem; and a *private one*. He was to explain to them fully the Gospel he preached among Gentiles, and had been preaching these ten years since his last visit to them. He wished that they

should understand each other. He took with him his faithful attendant Titus, a Gentile Christian. No doubt both Barnabas and he took the necessary steps to secure that they should, as good Jews, be ceremonially "clean" and fit for reception into Jewish society in Jerusalem.

But when they got into the company of the Christian leaders at headquarters certain "false brethren" contrived secretly to be witnesses of Saul's movements and manners, and they seized upon the fact that uncircumcised Titus was treated with the same liberty of social intercourse as if he were circumcised. They raised a cry. It was insisted that Titus should be circumcised so as not to disturb friendly fellowship. To this Saul would not yield, "no, not for a single hour." It would appear that the conference proceeded without Titus, or that he quietly took the position of a slave attending on Saul and kept to the necessary decorum of such an one. Be this as it may, the private consultation of Barnabas and Saul with Peter, John and James the Lord's brother ended in an Apostolic Agreement or Concordat, solemnly pledged by "the right hand of fellowship," that the two visitors should evangelize Gentiles, and the other three the Circumcision. It was further agreed that they should all "remember the poor," as the Antioch Gentiles had just been doing.

This Apostolic Covenant sought to secure greater union in Christ's Church; and the

bases of union were two simple principles or policies—the *Policy of the Open Door*, and the *Policy of the Unpressed Burden*. An Apostle's duty was to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ where the door stood open to him; and no religious custom should be pressed upon any Christian unless it was such as commended itself to all. Thus Paul respected Peter's past policy and Peter respected Paul's.

In Paul's own account of this Covenant he says that it was "when they saw that I had been intrusted with the Gospel of the Uncircumcision, even as Peter with the Gospel of the Circumcision," that they came to this decision. Do these terms, *the Uncircumcision* and *the Circumcision* mean simply the Gentiles and the Jews? Why is this antithesis so striking in "Galatians" and elsewhere in Paul's letters? Paul had many Jews in his Churches, besides Gentiles; and by this Covenant he cannot have been precluded from ministering to both; nor Peter either, since he had just come from Cæsarea. Is not the meaning discernible in the circumstances of the Church at the time? There were Jewish Christians who did *not* demand circumcision in a Christian, and others that did. The cleavage was very evident; its removal for the present a hopeless task. So this Covenant recognized Barnabas and Saul as Apostles to the churches that did not demand circumcision—"the Uncircumcision"; and the others as Apostles to the churches that did

demand it—"the Circumcision." There were Jews and Gentiles in the former; but Jews only in the latter, and such Gentiles as were willing to become Jewish proselytes.

Further, this Apostolic Agreement marks an important stage in early Christian history. For it was meant to bring into closer touch the leaders of two numerous but estranged bands of the Christian army. The man who by driving Stephen's sympathizers from Jerusalem had been a chief cause of the earliest estrangement and had for thirteen years been mourning "In ignorance I did it," was now moving for at least a partial healing of the breach. A complete healing he had attempted at his first visit to Jerusalem as a Christian, when he tried publicly to re-open the door which his own hands had shut; but he had miserably failed. Now he was glad to have this agreement, even if privately and with Apostles only; for it was a step in the right direction. Twelve years of preaching to Jew and Gentile, without a hint of recognition by them "that were Apostles before him," had opened his eyes to the blight of schism; for how could Christ's Church prevail, if divided against itself? The one law of its life is Love. Christian Jew and Christian Gentile must come into closer fellowship, and learn to love one another for Christ's sake; but if Apostles disagree the saints must suffer. These five Apostles saw it, and came to this Agreement—an abiding example to all leaders of Christian communi-

ties, however estranged they be by outward circumstances and prevented for the moment from that perfect fellowship in Christ to which is ever moving the world for which He died.

Luke does not in the Acts mention this *Concordat*. It is easy to guess why. He was writing of events known to the public and open to the scrutiny of any inquirer, but this was a private agreement and probably was not known to the Church generally. This event marks in his mind the end of a section, though the event is not advertised. Up to this point he has related such events as explain the expansion of the Church in a particular direction; and now he will proceed to deal with events that bear on Paul's conduct as an accused person. He has not named him by his Roman name yet.

Nor has he referred to other parts where the Christian Church was progressing. What had happened in Syria and Palestine had been happening in other countries also—"The Word of God grew and multiplied." Thus he closes the Section, not unmindful of the fact that the Word of God had been written by himself and others in vastly increased abundance, to satisfy the needs of the Churches that had already been founded by Paul, and remembering also the advent to their circle of a well-known Gospel-writer, whom he is to introduce in the next sentence—the opening of the sixth section.

SECTION VI

(*Contemporary with Acts xii. 25—xvi. 5, and Galatians*)

PAUL OPPOSED BY RIOTS : FOUNDING GENTILE CHURCHES

Returning from Jerusalem to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas brought with them Mark to act as *hypēretēs* in their contemplated missionary labours. A *hypēretēs* was a minister of the written Word (p. 102). It was now sixteen or seventeen years since the Crucifixion, and Mark had been during those years in the closest intimacy with the Apostles in Jerusalem and familiar with their public and private testimony to the life and works of Jesus. He was a skilful writer and was well known to his cousin Barnabas as writer of the Gospel story. His services would be of the utmost importance to the churches about to be formed; for not only would he read from his Gospel in their gatherings, but also he would produce copies of it for the young churches to preserve for their continued instruction. Though he did not long remain with the missionaries on this occasion, he would leave the records behind him; and Luke, if he had not already incorporated them in a fuller Gospel of his own, did so

now. For Luke would seem to have been one of Paul's attendants, like Titus, before this time. Acts gives us no hint of this (unless we allow that "we" occurs at xi. 28, as in some good MSS. of Acts); for neither Luke nor Titus, closely associated as they were in the compilation of Acts, are ever once named in the book.

There were at Antioch three prominent "prophets and teachers" besides Paul and Barnabas, all deeply absorbed in preaching the Gospel in that city with its multitude of believers—"Christians." These were Symeon Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, foster brother of Herod the Tetrarch, probably the men referred to in Acts xi. 19 ff. as having introduced the Gospel to Gentiles in the city. In consultation with Paul and Barnabas, who no doubt reported the agreement reached with the Apostles in Jerusalem, they recognized the call of these two to "the work whereunto the Spirit called them." At a Church meeting they set them apart by prayer and laying on of hands "and sent them away." Thus the Apostles in Jerusalem, though for justifiable reasons their hand in it was not advertised, took a very definite part in launching this, their first, mission to the heathen. Paul had already long experience in Gentile work, but this was the first that the Mother Church recognized. The missionaries went forth as the Apostles of the Church at Antioch, but they were "sent forth by the

Holy Spirit," and thus were Apostles of the Lord as were they of Jerusalem.

From this time onwards in the book of Acts Paul holds the prominent position in the story. Nothing is told except as it concerns him. This is partly due to his commanding pre-eminence, but is particularly due to the fact that the writer's object is to throw light upon the Apostle's conduct in view of three charges against him—of being a sedition-monger (dealt with in this sixth section), of propagating an illegal religion (dealt with in the seventh), and of profaning the Temple (countered in the last long section by an account of what really did lead to his arrest and trial). All the facts, deftly knit together in continuous story, bear upon these charges; and a world of contemporary Christian history is not even hinted at. The man Saul now appears under the name by which he is known to the Romans: "Saul is also called Paul," the man at present under trial. We shall have to watch carefully, reading between the lines and studying contemporary Scriptures, if we are even approximately to form a conception of what that history is.

Paul and Barnabas and their company made first a missionary journey through Cyprus, Barnabas' own country. There the Christian Church flourished in the synagogues, Gentiles among them. Cyprians were present at the first Pentecost, and to Cyprus

the Gospel came very early. Among the first Gentile preachers in Antioch had been evangelists from Cyrene and Cyprus. So that there was no need to introduce the Gospel for Gentiles there. In Salamis and all the synagogues of the island they preached ; and Mark was " minister " of the word. The people had not been accustomed to hear the Gospel story from a document written as it fell from the lips of the earliest Apostles who had seen the Lord. Barnabas in particular was glad to introduce to his native country, by his gifted cousin, so precious an instrument of Christian education ; and we shall find later that he and Mark returned to carry on the work. There was no opposition, except at Paphos, the chief seat of government, where Elymas the sorcerer placed obstacles in the Apostles' way, and had to be dealt with by Paul. The impression made on Sergius Paulus was favourable to the Gospel ; for which cause the story is told with fulness, for the governor was a Roman of rank whose witness might be appealed to.

Proceeding next to Pamphylia, a short sail, the Apostles did there presumably as in Cyprus ; for this province was near Tarsus and, although Syria-Cilicia had claimed Paul's energies those years past, Pamphylia could not fail to have heard the Gospel from pilgrims returning from Jerusalem and from converts of Paul himself. The Gospel for Gentiles would not be new there, albeit

Luke in the Acts tells us nothing that "Paul and his company" did there at that time, except part with Mark, for what reason we know not.

The missionaries proceeded to break new ground, far from the sea and regular routes. They came to Pisidian Antioch, and there, for the first time, Luke describes how Paul preached to a mixed company of Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue. Not that he had not been doing so all along, but because there began those organised attempts of his countrymen to embroil him with the Roman magistrates that gave rise to the charges of sedition against him. Paul had always been antagonized by unsympathetic Jews in synagogues, and probably had often to turn to the Gentiles outside them; but now unbelieving Jews sought to stir up against him unbelieving Gentiles. Accordingly Luke chooses here to describe his message and his method in preaching, for the first time and once for all. Listening to Paul at Pisidian Antioch, therefore, we listen to him as he began in the synagogue of any city he came to, before or after.

Paul's "sermon" is on the lines of Peter's, but he addressed both classes, Jews and them "that feared God"—that is, Gentile worshippers on the outskirts of the gathering—calling them all brethren, and offering "to every one that believeth" the Gospel of God's grace. That was his only offence,

bracketing Jew and Gentile in the offer of salvation; but it was an offence indeed to proud, exclusive Jews. They opposed, and after two or three weeks the Apostles had to retire from the synagogue, shaking the dust from their feet as if saying, "We will come no more into your synagogue." They preached outside to crowds of eager hearers. But the Jews stirred up the Gentile mob against them; for the organized opposition was calculated and implacable. This happened in every city, Antioch, Iconium and Lystra; and always with the same result. The multitude was roused to riot, and the town magistrates, to preserve the public peace, had to order them from the town and district. There was no dragging into court, no charge at law; just a disturbance of the peace, which was laid to the Apostles' door. Nevertheless in each case the Gospel was preached in the towns and their regions for some time before the mob could be worked up against them. They left considerable numbers of converts, though they had no time to organize them as churches. But when the year was out and the magistrates' order of expulsion had ceased to have force—during which time they had preached unmolested in Derbe and its region, and had doubtless received reports of the progress of the Faith in the cities they had had to leave—they returned and in quieter circumstances "confirmed" these churches and ordained elders, organizing with

a view to their continuance in growing strength.

At Lystra Barnabas and Paul were taken at first for gods by the heathen in the town, and an example is given in Acts of how, rejecting the honour, Paul preached to that kind of audience, untaught as they were in the Jewish faith and worship of One Living God. But there also the Jews pursued him; he was attacked and stoned and left for dead outside the city gate. But he revived and went to his friends.

Such in brief is the story of the founding of the churches of Galatia, the history of some two years at least, but only such history as was calculated to show on what was founded the charge of sedition against Paul. But that this organized opposition was part of a Jewish scheme emanating from Jerusalem itself, became apparent after the missionaries had left. For after they had gone and had for some time preached in Pamphylia, at Perga, and had returned to Syrian Antioch to report on their mission, they found that certain men had come to Antioch from Jerusalem, ostensibly from James, insisting on circumcision as necessary to salvation for all Christians. And not only so, but there seems to have come a messenger (by the land route) from Galatia reporting that the same class of Jews had turned up there and had subverted the faith of some. For that the Epistle to the Galatians is the earliest of Paul's extant

letters and was written at this time is to us conclusive (p. 148). It was addressed "to the churches of Galatia," for Paul had every reason to suppose that the emissaries from Jerusalem would by the time he wrote have sought to influence them all, but there is internal evidence that the messengers who brought the news had come from Lystra and that Paul had the church there more immediately in view as he wrote. The messenger may very well have been "Timothy of Lystra" who afterwards became his faithful attendant. The reason why he did not immediately hurry back to meet the Judaizing propaganda in person was that the same propaganda was disturbing the Church in Syrian Antioch, and he himself, with Barnabas and others, was about to go up to Jerusalem to have this question of the circumcision of Gentile Christians decided by the Mother Church.

Here we may pause to review the history of this demand for circumcision. For a dozen years Paul, not to speak of others, had been receiving uncircumcised Gentiles into Christian fellowship with Jewish Christians, but not requiring them to conform to the Jewish practice in Jerusalem. The Church in Jerusalem had not publicly recognized his work, that is, had not signified approval. Had this question been raised a few years earlier, the Mother Church would probably have disapproved. But a gradual trans-

formation of Christian opinion had taken place, even in Jerusalem. The first movement, with which Stephen was identified and which cost him his life and the expulsion of his followers, was a movement away from Judaism in respect of worship and ceremony—Temple and Law—practically involving the whole question. Jerusalem was too conservative and exclusive then to relax its customs; and it was the home of conservatism and exclusiveness still. But outside Jerusalem a more liberal spirit had sway, and soon Christians in Jerusalem had to face the question of recognizing their more liberal brethren in places beyond. Philip's work in receiving Samaritans (as he received the Eunuch) because they believed, although the Jewish Church door was closed to all such, was inspected by Peter and John and approved by them; and it was not disapproved by the Church. Ten years later Peter's receiving of uncircumcised Gentiles at Cæsarea (and, by implication, Barnabas' approval of the Gentile church at Syrian Antioch), though opposition was offered in Jerusalem, had the Church's approval, albeit somewhat grudging. The Christian leaders in Jerusalem were sympathetic, but they encountered opposition, more or less pronounced, by some of "the sect of the Pharisees that believed." They would not have ventured to practise any of the opposed views in Jerusalem, or even too openly to countenance them in places abroad.

But they had, only two years ago, privately given Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that they themselves should remain Apostles to the Circumcision, and these two to the Uncircumcision. The Christian Church in Jerusalem was Judaistic in outward form, and could not then have existed there in any other form; but in spirit it was altogether changed. It was probably the largest and most influential sect in the Holy City, but in their number there were not a few who were Jews first and Christians after. These were a sect within the Nazarene sect—the sect of Christian Pharisees—who would have the Judaistic form at all costs. Some of these had secretly set themselves to counteract Paul's teaching, and emissaries from them had been sent out to dog Paul's footsteps and appear among his converts the moment he had left, as they continued to do even after the question was settled.

Such was the state of affairs when Paul and Barnabas and their co-deputies came up from Antioch to have the question of circumcision settled in Jerusalem, having been received on their way south by land with marked approval of their gospel to the Gentiles by churches on the route, of whose existence we had not known, only surmised, but for the passing reference to them on this journey in Acts.

What was the decision? The Church in Jerusalem did not declare that there was no virtue in circumcising a Gentile. That would

have stirred up too much strife in Jerusalem. Paul had just written to the Galatians, "Circumcision is nothing." But the Church in Jerusalem did not say so. The decision merely directed that Gentile Christians should abstain from certain customs which would make fellowship with Jewish Christians in social life impossible. If Gentile brethren abstained from these they should "do well." The chief reason for raising a cry against them would be gone. There would be peace. Moses, said James the president of the council, had "in every city them that followed the Law"; that is, there were synagogues and strict Jews everywhere; and wherever a Christian church might be formed there were sure to be Jews in it as well as Gentiles. Their feelings had to be considered. The decrees, if obeyed, would be no hardship to Gentiles and would conciliate Jewish opposition. In one particular, abstaining from fornication, they made a moral claim on both parties; for the rest they forbade customs hateful to a Jew. This decision, "the Decrees," was sent by a letter which spoke of their "beloved Barnabas and Saul;" but of the emissaries as men not sent by the Mother Church. We can recognize the hand of Paul and Barnabas on the one part and the hand of Peter and James on the other, in the framing of the decrees. They did not go so far as Paul may have wished; but they went farther than the Church in

Jerusalem had openly dared hitherto. The Judaizing party were satisfied with the concession to their views so far as it brought Gentile customs in social intercourse into line with Jewish; for the whole assembly were agreed.

When the decrees were reported to the Antioch church the relief was great, for an open rupture was avoided. They were addressed, in the letter, to Gentiles in the Syrian churches, as if Galatians were not involved, and as if Paul had not mentioned them; but he delivered them to the Galatian churches "for to keep." Riots of Jews ceased to be roused by Gentile practices incompatible with Jewish sentiment, and even opposition to Paul's gospel had to take a different form in future.

This sixth section of Acts, after relating the separation of Paul and Barnabas, the circumcision of Timothy, and Paul's visitation of his Syrian and Galatian churches, all which must have taken a considerable time but occupies the briefest space in Acts, closes thus: "So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily."

Thus we are reminded that not only in the churches mentioned in this section, but also in churches all over "the world," wherever the Jewish Dispersion had prepared the way, the Christian faith kept advancing. Eighteen years had passed since the founding of the Church; thousands of pilgrims had returned

annually from Jerusalem with the imperishable gospel learned there, to scatter it abroad. Each year the interest had deepened. Demands for authentic Gospels came from all quarters and many were written. In Jerusalem the increase had been great, but in the scattered cities and their regions it had been greater. Silently and surely the Church grew. Many in synagogues far from the Holy City studied the Scriptures and became Christian. This process did not take long, for Jews and sympathetic Gentile fellow-worshippers already had the Old Testament and needed but evidence of the Resurrection to become Christians.

Paul could hardly now come upon a synagogue in which there were no Christians — *Jewish* believers in Jesus. But there were Gentile fellow-worshippers ready to receive his Gospel. He was conspicuously an Apostle to the Gentiles. Wherever he came unbelieving Jews were wildly antagonized. If they had been reduced to silence by the decision of the Jerusalem Council, having no hope of approval there, there were still among them "false brethren," who were ready to force a decision, in which the Church would have no say at all. They could still count on the unbelieving Jews, non-Christian. Their opposition was quickly to take another form, as we shall see.

Meantime, before passing from this period of the Church's history, we note that there

must have been in Galatia alone during these two years a great deal of successful labour and much ingathering and growth in grace, which is entirely passed over in Acts, so clouded over by the dust and din of wrangling as not even to be suggested. We must always remember the limited object of the book. To describe the more intimate life of the Church was no part of it. Gaius of Derbe and Timothy of Lystra were but two of many labourers in the Gospel there, albeit they were a prominent two in Paul's later travels. The only reference to Church affairs mentioned is Paul's "confirming" of the churches, and ordaining elders. This passing word is like the opening of a window through which the reflecting reader sees just what previous references in the book would lead him to expect. He would see the organization of the fellowship as it was at the first, including some arrangement whereby Church finances should be in the hands of others than ministers of the Word—in fact, deacons. He would see also in each church men acknowledged as prophets and teachers, as at Antioch. He would conclude that Luke's Gospel and other Scriptures had been left with the brethren. When Paul and his company went back to confirm and ordain, care would be taken that all these things should be attended to.

There is one incident in this section that seems unnecessary if Acts was written for

Paul's trial; but second thoughts reveal how very important it was. This is the story of the circumcision of Timothy. We shall find that one of the charges against Paul was that, not content with a settlement which *did not require* Gentiles to be circumcised, he had been teaching Jews not to circumcise their children. If his accusers bring that up, they will have to account for his circumcision of Timothy. In his letters to the Corinthians his position is made plain—that a Jew should remain a Jew and a Gentile should remain a Gentile, when they become Christian. He does not teach anything contrary to this about their children; but any one can see that in time Jewish children would be treated like Gentile children in the Church of Christ.

Paul's teaching on the Value of Circumcision, as well as his strong resentment on hearing of the inroad of Judaizing doctrine in his newly founded churches, can best be learned from his letter to the Galatians. A synopsis is here given. The first two chapters are historical and very illuminating; the rest is the teaching explaining his Gospel to Gentiles.

Epistle to the Galatians

Historical (Gal. i., ii., etc.).—The Epistle to the Galatians supplies many facts of early Church history unrecorded by Acts and lighting it up. These facts all date from before A.D. 49, and all have a bearing on the

Gentile controversy of that year, though they range over the long period of seventeen years. Such facts are the following : (1) That from the time of Paul's conversion in A.D. 32, the gospel for Gentiles lay on his heart (i. 16; ii. 2). (2) That he consulted no one on this matter, not even the Apostles, when he first faced the duty, but retired from Damascus into Arabia for a time (i. 16, 17). (3) That his ministry had from the first been independent of the Apostles, and his apostleship was in no way derived from them (i. 1, 11); for he had only thrice, since his conversion, had opportunity of consulting any of them; of these opportunities *two were in Jerusalem*: first, three years after his ministry began, when, in A.D. 35, 36, he saw only Peter, and James the Lord's brother (i. 18, 19), and again fourteen years after his ministry began, when, in the famine year, A.D. 45, he and Barnabas met Peter, John, and James the Lord's brother, and were recognized by these three as called to the Gentile ministry (ii. 1-10); and *the third was in Antioch*, where in A.D. 44 Peter (fleeing from Herod) paid a visit and had to be withstood by Paul himself—chief of the first Apostles though he was—for treating Christian Gentiles as unclean (ii. 11-15). (4) That Titus, known to the Galatians as an uncircumcised Gentile and one of Paul's attendants (ii. 1), had been with Paul on the Jerusalem visit of A.D. 45; and that Paul had refused to allow him to be circumcised when,

and because, false brethren had insisted on circumcision as necessary (ii. 1-5). (5) That Paul advised circumcision of Jewish families, though he denied it to Gentiles (v. 11¹; cf. 1 Cor. vii. 18-24; 1 Cor. ix. 20-22; etc.). (6) That between A.D. 32 and 43 Paul was engaged preaching in Syria and Cilicia, and to Gentiles (i. 22-24). (7) That emissaries from Jerusalem succeeded in making the Gentiles in the Galatian churches believe that for salvation in Jesus Christ they must be circumcised, and that this happened within a very short time of Paul's leaving them (i. 6-8; iii. 1-5). (8) That the news from Galatia came by a messenger from the region of Lystra (perhaps Timothy); for there was urgent need to send a messenger before the emissaries had proceeded so far as Pisidian Antioch, and references in the letter to recent occurrences point to Lystra; *e. g.* he had been received there as a messenger of God (iv. 14; Acts xiv. 12, 15); he had received bruising of the body there by stoning (vi. 17; Acts xiv. 19); and he had paid a second visit (iv. 13)² which does not suggest Derbe as the church chiefly in mind.

¹ "If I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? One would think the Cross had ceased to be a stumbling-block!" Meaning—"They know I advise Jews to continue the racial rite of circumcision. Yet they persecute me! Is it circumcision or the Cross that offends them?"

² "At the first" should be "at the former (of my two visits)." So is the Greek word.

Paul's Gentile gospel in "Galatians" (iii.-vi.).—The main part of Galatians, beginning with the third chapter, shows how Paul from start to finish of his ministry justified the preaching of the gospel to all men inside or outside the Jewish Church, and especially how he repudiated the proposal that believing Gentiles should become proselytes before being received into Christian fellowship. Briefly put, his reasoning is as follows: (1) The Spirit of Christ is received by faith, not by observing Jewish law (iii. 1-10). (2) Righteous living is by faith, not by keeping the law (iii. 11-14). (3) God's covenant promise to bless all nations through Abraham's seed stood secure hundreds of years before the law was given by Moses, and the law could not disannul that promise (iii. 15-18). (4) The law was but an interlude in Israel's disobedient career (iii. 19-23), a tutor till the obedience of faith should come (iii. 23, 24), and is no longer needed when that obedience *has* come (iii. 25). (5) Believers in Christ are all ONE in Him, whatever their race, social position or sex, and are the promised seed that will bless the world (iii. 26-29); for the Spirit of Jesus emancipates alike the Jew from law and the Gentile from idols, so that they are one family of God (iv. 1-11). (6) Jew to Gentile, and Gentile to Jew should be as brother (iv. 12), and therefore he, the spiritual father of believing Gentiles, is distressed by these family divisions

(iv. 13-20). (7) If Gentile believers will have the law, let them remember this about the law, that (a) it makes bond-slaves where free spirits were meant to be, like Hagar's child where Sarah's was intended (iv. 21—v. 1); and (b) recourse to the law makes Christ of no use to a believer, and ends one's claim to be Christian (v. 2-4). (8) Circumcision and uncircumcision are alike of no consequence; the vital thing is faith. But to trifle with circumcision will end in denying the Cross (v. 5-12). (9) Gentile believers are at liberty to observe Jewish law or not, as they please: but they must remember that the real law is spiritual; no flesh-cutting can fulfil it. Love is the only true fulfilling of that law whose highest command is: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Spirit-service (love) is opposed to Flesh-service (circumcision), as things of the spirit are opposed to things of the flesh (v. 13-26).

The Conclusion of the Whole Matter.—The letter was dictated; but the closing sentences are written by Paul's own hand (vi. 11). (1) The cry for circumcision is a Jew's way of avoiding persecution for the Cross of Christ, of which he is ashamed, but in which Paul glories (vi. 12-14); and (2) the rule of guidance is that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is worth considering; but a new life is. Peace and mercy therefore be on all that follow this rule (vi. 15, 16, 18).

SECTION VII

(*Contemporary with Acts xvi. 6—xix. 20; also
1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians,
1 Timothy, and Titus*)

PAUL OPPOSED BY ACTIONS AT LAW: VAST
MISSION WORK

The history of the next seven years (A.D. 49–56) given in Acts is but a skeleton record of the provinces and districts in which Paul pursued his missionary labours during the period, except for incidents that bear upon the charge against him of introducing a new religion, which was illegal. Even the speech at Athens is reported to show how correct was his conduct there, in addressing a body of cultured heathen; for his trial would certainly raise questions as to proselytizing, as well as preaching a new religion.

Paul, accompanied by Silas and Timothy, proceeded to break new ground after the re-visitation of the Galatian churches. Barnabas and he had dissolved companionship on Mark's account. For Paul was nowise sure that Mark would not, as before, desert the work, and refused to have him. Barnabas therefore went with Mark to Cyprus, and Paul with Silas proceeded northwards. One may remark here that Silas probably was an early disciple (a witness to the Resurrection),

a leading preacher in Jerusalem, and a Roman citizen like Paul himself;¹ but chiefly one has to note that he was a man, like Barnabas, well known to the Church in Jerusalem, and Paul chose him for his standing there. He needed a co-worker who was not, like himself, specially hated by the Judaistic party; for his presence might smooth the way if these riots were to be renewed. He was accompanied also by Luke and Titus, who begin in this section to figure in the Acts story as "We."

The party at first evangelized the Phrygian towns northwards, being prevented from striking west to Ephesus, a desirable city to work from. We do not know what prevented them: but "the spirit of Jesus suffered them not" to go in that direction. They would do as always, stay long enough to found churches of the Gentiles as they proceeded towards the Black Sea province of Bithynia. They did not, however, enter that province, but turned to the left and hurried through Mysia (*neglecting* it as the Greek has it) to Troas on the Ægean Sea. Thence Acts hastens the Apostle across to Macedonia, for there began a new form of opposition to his work which must now be described in detail.

This was at Philippi. The conversion and faithfulness of Lydia and her house are told, but it is the incident of the Apostles' imprisonment that takes the chief place in the story.

¹ xv. 32, and xvi. 37.

They had been so successful, especially in connection with casting out the spirit of divination from a girl, to her employers' great loss, that the people were appealed to as to whether this was a legal religion the missionaries were preaching. A hue and cry was raised. Paul and Silas were dragged before the magistrates. Unluckily for the Apostles, Philippi was a new colony, and the magistrates scrupulously observed the Roman law, fearing to lose their rights by neglect. The charge was teaching a religion not lawful for the people to receive. The magistrates did not give the Apostles a chance of defending themselves. They ordered that they be "shamefully entreated" (as Paul put it in a letter to the Thessalonians)—beaten with many stripes and cast into prison. But by night came an earthquake, the opening of the prison doors, the conversion of the jailer, his friendly services to the missionaries and their fellowship with his family till morning. Then the magistrates, fearing the meaning of the earthquake, sent word to the jailer to release them. But the Apostles were resolved to emphasize the wrong that had been done to them; for they were Roman citizens themselves and the law forbade Roman citizens being beaten for any reason or condemned without a hearing. The magistrates must as publicly take them out as they had put them in. Here was a difficulty. These preachers would have the magistrates

publicly own their mistake! They came to the prison, personally apologized and begged the Apostles to leave the town for the present. Complying, the Apostles left such a friendly impression that the Christians at Philippi seem to have been favoured in the town for many a day. Luke told this story with special emphasis so that a Roman reader might see Paul's readiness not to make a public outcry and his wish not to create a disturbance of the peace. Probably no magistrates' report of the event had been sent to Rome.

From Philippi the missionaries proceeded, by way of Apollonia and Amphipolis, to Thessalonica. That they preached in these cities goes without saying; but at Thessalonica the preaching led to the next trouble. Here for weeks many converts were won in the synagogue, a great majority of whom were Gentiles and "of honourable women not a few." Here Paul was refreshed by the receipt of a gift from the saints at Philippi (Phil. iv. 16), for they knew that he worked with his own hand to support himself on the mission. But here the unbelieving Jews in three weeks made the synagogue impossible for him. He had to form a Christian church outside; and when the synagogue's emptiness afterwards galled them they began to think of opposing. They reflected that the Apostles had been cast into prison at Philippi for illegal preaching. Could they not make a

charge against him in open court? Let them stir up the rabble to do it. So the rabble attacked Jason's house where Paul and Silas lodged. Not finding them, for they were concealed by friends, they took Jason himself and such others as they could find into court. The charge preferred was that Jason had harboured fugitives lately escaped from Philippi, disturbers of the world's peace (so well known to Jews was Paul by rumour throughout the Dispersion); and that Jason and his friends practised illegal worship, treasonable in fact, for they owed allegiance to another than Cæsar, one Jesus whom they talked of as their King (*Christos*). Jason, with his friends, had to give security that Paul should not show his face in the town. With this they were dismissed. Jason seems to have been a well-known citizen, and by this decision to have been threatened with pains and penalties if Paul or Silas appeared in the town again. It was a devil's trick (as Paul said afterwards—in 1 Thess. ii. 18). Paul and Silas had to escape in the darkness, to save these friends. [After Gallio's decision, Paul might come back at pleasure.]

We next read of them at Beroëa, where they got a good reception in the synagogue. There was no opposition, but much sympathetic study of Scripture in following Paul's argument for Jesus as the Christ and for his gospel to Gentiles. When the unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica heard of this, they

could not understand the unanimity of the synagogue of Berea. Perhaps, thought they, the Bereans imagined that it was a movement of heathens that had driven the preachers from Thessalonica and they had sympathized. So they came down to Berea in numbers to show their fellow-countrymen that *Jews behind* had moved the court at Thessalonica. They proceeded to do here as they had done in their own town; but now the special object of their wrath was Paul. He, anticipating trouble to his friends, at once departed, making his way by the aid of friends to Athens. Thither he requested his friends to send Silas and Timothy to him on their return.

The churches that had been founded at Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea had not had time to be organized, just as it had been in Galatia. But Paul, learning by experience, had left friend after friend to consolidate his work—apparently Luke at Philippi, Titus at Thessalonica, Silas and Timothy at Berea; for he was left at Athens alone (1 Thess. iii. 1). Silas and Timothy, on the return of Paul's guides, proceeded to Athens, for Paul waited their coming there (Acts xvii. 16); but when they came and reported how shepherdless the Macedonian churches were, he at once sent them back, Timothy to Thessalonica (for Silas could not go thither without risk to Jason), and Silas to Berea (1 Thess. iii. 1-10). Paul foresaw a great future for the

Macedonian churches, and laid the foundations with the skill of a master-builder.

Beyond the reporting of his speech to the Areopagus Council, there is little told of Paul's stay at Athens. This speech, one out of many that might have been reported in Acts, had the author been concerned to give them, is recorded to show how free Paul was of anything like proselytizing. When the Council heard him it was plain to him that he was not welcomed there (for public teachers had to be authorized by the Areopagus), and so he speedily left for Corinth. Athens was a free city, with its own manners, but Corinth would give a Roman citizen a Roman's welcome. Nevertheless he had made converts at Athens who were noteworthy—Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris. Perhaps inquiry might be made of Dionysius regarding Paul's behaviour.

Beginning in the synagogue of Corinth, baptizing his first converts because he was alone (1 Cor. i. 15-27), making the acquaintance of and winning to Christ two that were fast friends till the end, Aquila and Priscilla, Paul carried on a fruitful work. But he had soon to separate his disciples and carry on the work outside the synagogue. He was "with them in much fear and trembling" as he wrote to them afterwards. Unbelieving Jews, having already heard of attempts to get him before a court of law, resolved boldly to impeach him and his religion in the

proconsular court. Their arguments before Gallio were to the effect that he had been guilty of setting up an illegal religion as if it were the Jewish religion. It was very like it to a Roman's eye; but there was this and that difference, specially differences in synagogue worship and control. The Jewish religion was protected by law, but this was not; and the preacher of it was guilty of an offence against the State. When it came to Paul's turn to speak, Gallio interposed. No reply was necessary. This was a matter of words and names in the Jewish Law, and he was not minded to be a judge of such things. Thus did the Roman proconsul recognize Gentile Christianity as a *religio licita*, entitled by Roman law to the same toleration as Judaism, being dependent on the Scriptures which constituted the legal charter of both. He drove them from the judgment-seat. Thereupon their implacable hatred of Paul took another form. They reverted to an old trick, a riot. Because they dared not beat a Roman citizen like Paul, they beat the ruler of their own synagogue, thus making such public disturbance as might lead to Paul's ejection from the city as the prime cause of it. They suspected Sosthenes was rather inclined to Paul's views himself, probably by the way the case was conducted; and Sosthenes next appears as a fellow-worker with Paul (1 Cor. i. 1). Gallio, however, was not moved; he "cared for none of these things."

The Jews seem to have got a lesson, for never again do we hear of these methods of persecution, there or elsewhere. On the other hand, Paul found that, instead of being driven from cities after a few weeks, he might stay as long as he chose. He was a year and a half altogether in Corinth now (A.D. 50, 51). He was three or four years in Asia with Ephesus for headquarters (A.D. 53-56); and two years' re-visitation of his previously founded churches was sandwiched between them—a period of seven years' fruitful work, all included in the period covered by this section of Acts, although only a few verses are given to it.

Silas and Timothy had rejoined Paul, apparently before the trial, with news from Macedonia; and some time soon after the two letters to the Thessalonians were written, a glance at whose contents throws light upon the Church's life at this time. I Thessalonians bears its own evidence to both place of writing and date—(iii. 1-10 compared with Acts xviii. 5).

I *Thessalonians*.

The letter is written in A.D. 50, 51 as from Paul, Silas, and Timothy, and is partly *historical*, giving some idea of the early Christian church of Thessalonica, and partly *didactic*.

I.—HISTORICAL. (I) In their “work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope”

the Thessalonians were an example to all in Macedonia and Achaia, and everywhere else (i. 1-9). (2) Many non-synagogue Gentiles had joined the Church: they "turned unto God from idols" (i. 10). (3) The Apostles, after their "shameful treatment" at Philippi, had not presumed on their dignity, but had been as gentle nurses with dear children (ii. 1-12). (3) Their message had been received as God's Word, and the persecution suffered in Thessalonica at Gentile hands on account of the preaching to Gentiles was like the persecution suffered in Jerusalem at Jewish hands for the same reason (ii. 13-16). Paul would fain have visited them, but "Satan hindered" (ii. 17, 20). (5) Timothy had been sent to comfort them, and now had brought "glad tidings of their faith and love" (iii. 1-10). (6) Please God, Paul, Silas, and Timothy would return to Thessalonica, to see the progress of the Church and establish it.

II.—DIDACTIC. (1) *Two Counsels on Christian Life*: (a) *Holy living*: specially the putting away of that Gentile vice, fornication (iv. 1-8); and (b) *Brotherly Love*: towards all Christians, but not slothfully presuming upon one another's help (iv. 9-12). (2) *Two Lessons in Christian Faith* (about the Lord's coming, as if answering questions put): (a) *Christians that die* will not miss the Lord's coming; they will meet the Lord "in the air" (in the unseen) before those who survive

them (iv. 13-18); and (b) *The Lord's Coming* will be as a thief in the night; none can tell when, and all must watch (v. 1-11). (3) *Some Rules of Christian Fellowship*: (a) Show respect to elders (iv. 12, 13); (b) Study peace and mutual helpfulness (iv. 13-15); (c) Make church life a joy, a prayer, a thanksgiving—the divine ideal (iv. 16-18); (d) Keep open hearts to the Spirit, the Word, the best (iv. 19-22).

III. CONCLUSION (iv. 23-28).

The second letter to the Thessalonians seems to suggest that one had come to Corinth with news that the question of the Lord's coming again, referred to in the first probably because of what Silas and Timothy had reported, still occupied the anxious minds of the Thessalonians, and also that some new converts were far from perfect in conduct. It was (like the first letter) from Paul, Silas and Timothy; for it was Paul's practice to include with himself any one present at the moment of writing who had exercised the prophetic gift among those to whom he wrote.

2 Thessalonians.

I. The letter begins with thanksgiving for their steadfastness in love amid much persecution, and with the assurance that their faith will as certainly have its reward in blessing as persecution will end in the doom of the persecutor (i.).

II. *Concerning Christ's Coming*.—(1) They must not allow themselves to think that the day is already come. No matter by whom or by what suggested (by one speaking in the spirit, or in a sermon, or in a letter like the one already sent), it is delusion (ii. 1-3). (2) There must first be a great change before the Lord may be said to have come: for the man of sin, "the lawless one, who sits in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God," must first be removed (Emperor-worship, with its attendant evils, must first disappear¹). That pagan lie (that Cæsar is divine) is a device of "unrighteousness"—worldly policy (ii. 4-12). (3) The glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and the sanctification of His people is the great thing to seek; it is secured "in every good word and work"; pray therefore for the success of Gospel-preaching (ii. 13-iii. 5).

III. *Concerning Christian Fellowship*.—He bids them refuse to company with the disorderly who will not conform to the Apostle's teaching and practice. In particular (as in the first letter) he emphasizes the duty of

¹ The worship of the Emperor in provincial cities was a cult at this time; and it would appear that in Thessalonica it flourished. The charge against Paul at Thessalonica was that he taught the worship of another Emperor than Cæsar. Paul in the letter carefully avoids Cæsar's name. The interpretation of this passage requires to be *such as the first readers would understand*. A possible Jewish Antichrist yet to appear would not readily occur to them. But they would understand a reference to Cæsar.

working for one's own living and not depending on others.

In witness whereof, Paul draws attention to his own hand put to the letter by writing the closing words (as if there had been suspicion as to the authorship of the first letter).

The Church at Corinth was now thoroughly "confirmed," highly organized, strong in numbers, and rich in men capable of carrying on. Silas and Timothy had aided Paul in the prophetic office; Luke and Titus, having long since finished their work of organizing in the north of Macedonia, were doubtless with Paul at Corinth. The labour of providing the Churches of Macedonia and Achaia with Scriptures fell chiefly upon them. Nor was the work confined to the capital; for when, two or three years later, Paul wrote the first of his letters to the Corinthians that have come down to us, he addressed it to the Church at Corinth and "all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus in every place," that is, in Achaia; while 2 Corinthians was addressed to the Saints in "the whole of Achaia."

At length, after a year and a half in Corinth, Paul began to think of Ephesus and the province of Asia. Ephesus, like Athens, was a free city and a university centre. It might open its door to his gospel, and Gallio's decision would make the way easier. Yet he must use caution; for to Jews he was, from long

and exclusive fellowship with Gentiles at Corinth, ceremonially unclean. The synagogue in Ephesus might be closed to him; and, at the beginning of his mission there, this would be against him. Silas was in like case. They therefore resolved on renewing fellowship with their Jewish brethren in Jerusalem and on marking their adherence to the Church of their fathers by taking a vow when the journey began, which would be fulfilled only in the Temple at Jerusalem. At Cenchreæ, the port of Corinth, they shaved their heads; for Acts, being concerned only with Paul's movements, tells that *he* had taken a vow; but Silas would do the same. That he went with Paul to Jerusalem would seem most natural; for he was in Paul's eye a kind of guarantee for his own conduct to the more jealous of the Jewish Christians there.

Aquila and Priscilla were to settle at Ephesus, and Paul and his party set out with them. He made his first visit to Ephesus in their company at this time—a passing visit. He went into the synagogue and spoke there, with the symbols of being a whole-hearted Jew patent to all in his shorn head. They urged him to stay with them—perhaps that was all he wanted at present—but he pleaded his vow. He must go on to Jerusalem. He would, however, return to them. Thus had he broken the ice, as it were, against his beginning a mission there.

He had far more on his heart than visiting

Jerusalem and seeing the brethren there. He was anxious to visit all the churches (Syrian, Cilician, Galatian, Phrygian) founded by him before he entered Macedonia and Achaia. After the brief account of the preliminary visit to Ephesus, Acts proceeds thus: "And when he had landed at Cæsarea, he went up and saluted the Church, and went down to Antioch, and, having spent some time there, he departed and went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, in order, stablishing the disciples."

Such is Acts' account of Paul's ministry during most part of the next two years, about A.D. 51, 52. For one has only to think of the ground covered, to see that a year would not suffice. After the journey south and the regulation time spent in the Temple, Silas and he would take considerable time "saluting the Church." They had to tell some wonderful stories of how the gospel had been making progress since the Jerusalem Council three years ago. Then on to Antioch, where they reported and spent longer time. Then Paul (we have no hint that Silas went back with him) and his company embarked on what was now a herculean task, the visiting of the churches of Syria-Cilicia (not mentioned before, nor now, in Acts), of Galatia, and of Phrygia, the part evangelized immediately before Paul went first to Macedonia. Not the chief-town churches only, but all the subordinate churches had to be

“stablished.” More than a year certainly must have elapsed since Paul left Corinth ere this missionary journey was completed. One thing he did on this journey; he arranged for a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem to be sent from the churches of Galatia. They were to send with it, along with himself if he should go to Jerusalem again, two of their number as commissioners, or “apostles” from themselves. Gaius of Derbe and Timothy of Lystra were the two elected, to join similar “apostles” from the other churches of the Gentiles (1 Cor. xvi. 1-4). Besides arranging this, Paul had “the care of all the churches” on his mind and heart, many questions to answer, and many problems to solve.

The visitation finished, Paul came to Ephesus. Meanwhile there had come to Ephesus an Alexandrian Jew, Apollos; a man mighty in the Scriptures, and one of Paul’s most effective workers afterwards in Ephesus. But he had gone on to Corinth and was proving himself a bulwark of great strength, contending with the Jews there. He had, when coming to Ephesus, been taken in hand by Aquila and Priscilla and by them advised to go to Corinth for the present. When Paul arrived, twelve of this man’s disciples, who knew as yet only John’s Baptism, were baptized into the Name of Him of whom John prophesied that he would baptize with the Holy Spirit. The

Holy Spirit came to them also, and they "spoke with tongues." This was the beginning of Paul's work in Ephesus. He preached for three months in the synagogue, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the Kingdom, but at length "hardened and disobedient" Jews so opposed the Gentile gospel that Paul had to quit, separating his disciples. For two years he carried on a new kind of missionary labour; for he reasoned in the lecture-room of one Tyrannus, not weekly, but daily. He gathered about him many helpers as time went on. Apollos (1 Cor. xvi. 12) joined him there. If Paul's scholarship was tested in Athens by one address, how it would be tested in that lecture-room with many. What clash of intellectual arms took place there, Luke, Titus and Timothy being witnesses! What eloquence did Apollos show and what force did Paul display! Many of the leaders of public opinion were won to the faith; many political dignitaries (Asiarchs) became friends of Paul, some of them convinced Christians. And how the adherents of the several religious guilds, who came to that lecture-room to hear the views of Paul, would urge their own philosophical views against his, till the place became at times a veritable arena of debate! But the gospel came more and more to the front.

Meanwhile, throughout the province of Asia, many came to the help of Paul and his

company—Aristarchus, Tychicus, Epaphras, Sosthenes, Artemas, Barnabas [for he is referred to in Colossians (iv. 10) as one known], and a host of others. Not in Ephesus only did the word spread. "The seven churches of Asia," Colosse, Hierapolis, Troas, etc. (see also Rom. xvi.), "*all* Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jew and Gentile." Thus does Acts describe one of the most successful missions undertaken, with Paul at the head of things, in early Christian times. And but for this single remark we had known as little of it from Acts, as we know of the Syria-Cilicia mission. This is another proof of the limits of Acts. Some light we shall get from Paul's address to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus as to his own manner of life among them for three years. It would seem that the lecture-room of Tyrannus was in use for public discussions for two years, and that for a considerable time longer Paul had his headquarters in Ephesus.

But we have information about this period giving much more important facts than Acts was concerned to give. While the work in the lecture-room of Tyrannus was going on, news had been coming through from Corinth that gave Paul anxious concern, and occasioned the writing of 1 Corinthians. Apollos had brought news: Sosthenes, once ruler of the synagogue of Corinth, the man beaten by the Jews at the time of Gallio's decision, and now an active brother-prophet whom

Paul joins with himself as sender of 1 Corinthians, had come also bringing news. "Members of the house of Chloe" had been bearers of bad news. And finally, a deputation from the Church itself—Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus—brought questions for Paul to answer. What these rumours were, and what the questions, will be seen at a glance from the epitome of the letter given below. Paul took time to deal with them all, and sent the letter by Timothy as one of authority in the early church of Corinth. In it he promises to come himself shortly. He hopes that Timothy, now coming for the first time with authority, will not be despised (presumably for his youth—cf. 1 Timothy iv. 12), and that his return will be expedited. In counselling them to do as the Galatian churches were doing in the matter of a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, he says that he intends to visit the Macedonian and Achaian churches, leaving Ephesus after Pentecost; and after spending ten months with them, to take the collection to Jerusalem in time for the Passover (xvi. 5-9). Circumstances compelled him to alter this plan, as we shall see, by one year. For writing (2 Cor. ix. 2) not later than the spring of 56, he says "Achaia was ready (with the collection) *a year past*"; that is to say, in the spring of 55, Achaia had already collected in response to 1 Cor. xvi. 1. 1 Corinthians must therefore have been written in 54. Paul did not then wish to

visit Corinth "by the way," on a passing visit, but would spend a while with them (xvi. 7); and he expected that visit would be soon (iv. 19). We shall learn from 2 Corinthians why it was in A.D. 57, not in A.D. 56, that he went to Jerusalem.

The letter is of great historical value. The Judaizing party had dogged his steps in Achaia as in Galatia. No sooner had he left than a Cephas party arose, advocating the Jerusalem practice of the Law. Then Apollos' gifted ministry had made another party. While another, impatient of all parties (Paul's, Cephas', or Apollos'), claimed to be Christ's party. Such a view of 1 Corinthians as is given below will reveal one of Paul's churches to our modern eyes.

1 *Corinthians*.

About A.D. 54 Paul and Sosthenes to the church in Corinth and in "every place" (in Achaia). The letter is specially valuable as showing HOW PAUL "CONFIRMED" A GENTILE CHURCH by letter when he could not do so by mouth.

I. BRIEF INTRODUCTION.

II. SINS AGAINST THE CHURCH'S LIFE.

I. *The Sin of Division* (i. 10—iv. 21).—Paul has heard of party-spirit in the church of Corinth, caused by disputes as to the relative "wisdom," "power" and rank of different preachers. There was a Paul, an Apollos,

and a Cephas (Peter) party: and a fourth repudiating them all—a Christ party. (1) Of these “divisions” he says that Christ’s disciples are one indivisible body (i. 10–17); that while “*the word of the Cross*” separates Christians from Greeks (to whom it is foolishness) and from Jews (to whom it is a scandal), it unites Christians among themselves, so that, though not many wise, mighty or noble (in the worldly sense) are among them, they have for their wisdom Christ, and for their power the Spirit (i. 18—ii. 5); that there is indeed a spiritual “wisdom,” but it is for the mature, not for the babes; for the spiritual, not for the carnal—not for such as indulge in such strifes (ii. 6—iii. 9). (2) Christian ministers, like all other disciples, are one in Christ; Paul plants, Apollos waters, but God gives the increase; Paul lays the foundation at Corinth, others build on it, but they are all stewards of God, and their work will be tested by Him. In short, they all alike belong to Christ’s Church, and to Christ (iii. 10—iv. 8); the Apostles about whom they strive are men “doomed to death,” who suffer while the disciples enjoy the benefit of their sufferings; his saying of which is not meant to shame them but admonish them—a word from their spiritual Father, who founded their Church (iv. 9–16). (3) On account of these divisions he now sends Timothy, who knows the usual teaching “in every church,” and Paul himself will come shortly (iv. 17–21).

2. *The Sin of Fornication.*—(1) Paul has heard with great horror that a sin unheard of among Gentiles is suffered in the church at Corinth (incest); and he demands the instant dismissal from Church fellowship of the offender. Christ's body must be pure (v. 1-8). (2) In thus forbidding Christians to company with such an one, he does not mean that they must not mingle with fornicators in the city of Corinth (for he might as well bid them quit this life). He means fornicators "within the Church" (v. 9-11).

3. *The Sin of Litigation.*—Paul has heard of Christians having "lawsuits with one another." This is "a defect"; for the judgment of an outside (heathen) court should be "of no account" to those within the Church. They should trust a wise man among themselves to settle their disputes (vi. 1-8).

4. *Sin against the Holy Spirit.*—All unrighteousness (work of the flesh) excludes from God's kingdom; old Gentile vices must be put away for Christ's sake. Things "lawful" may not be "expedient"; and sins against the body are sins against the Holy Spirit whose temple the body is (vi. 9-19).

III. QUESTIONS OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT ANSWERED.

1. *On Marriage.*—In Paul's private opinion celibacy is preferable (vii. 1-9). By Divine law divorce of Christians is forbidden (10, 11).

Christians married to unbelievers should not seek divorce, but rather hope to win their partners to faith; but if the unbelieving partner claims divorce, let it be so (vi. 12-16). Paul's advice "in all the churches" is that, on becoming a Christian, one should abide in one's social calling—Jew as Jew, Gentile as Gentile, slave as slave, married as married, unmarried as unmarried. *But this is not a divine ordinance—it is a counsel of expediency.* Virgins therefore may be married or given in marriage as may seem best; but in Paul's opinion they are better unmarried, and widows happier as widows, *in the present circumstances* (of Corinth), and because family care distracts from the Lord's service (vii. 17-40).

2. *Eating Things offered to Idols.*—A Christian is free to eat them (for being offered in the idol's temple does not alter the food); but if eating gives offence to a brother (a Jew), be ruled by love, and abstain. Paul's rule is never to eat such food where it may give offence (viii.).

3. *Support of the Ministry.*—(1) Apostles, prophets, teachers have the same right as ordinary members—to eat or not to eat; to marry (like Cephas and others) or not to marry; to work with their own hands for their living (as Paul and Barnabas) or to "forbear working" (ix. 1-6). (2) But the Divine ordinance is that "they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." Paul and his fellow "Apostles" had not used this

right in Corinth, deeming it not expedient. (3) But they *had* to preach, whether paid or not: woe to Paul if he did not! The same constraint left him no choice but be Jew to Jew, Gentile to Gentile, weak to weak, and strong to strong—that he may win souls. Nevertheless all the time he had to care for his own soul against temptation (ix. 7–27).

4. *Attitude to Idolatry*.—Modern Christians, like God's ancient people, all eat the same spiritual food and drink the same spiritual drink. But they are beset by the same dangers that ruined most of these ancients—lusting after evil things, false security, and idolatrous example. The rule must be laid down for all, that, as there is nothing in common between Christ and idols, Christians must “flee from idols”—give idolatrous customs a wide berth (x. 1–22).

5. *Rules for Christian Fellowship*.—(1) As to *eating things sacrificed*, study the good of others, and “seek the profit of the many,” *i. e.* the majority (x. 23—xi. 1). (2) As to *women's dress in church*. In Corinth women should be veiled in church, and wear the hair long, but in the churches generally there is no such law (xi. 2–16). (3) As to *observance of the Lord's Supper*, Paul hears with sorrow that the divisions have marred its observance; there has been eating and drinking in cliques apart. The rule is to “wait for one another” (xi. 17–24).

IV. THE EMPLOYMENT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

(1) Different gifts are from one and the same spirit, and in the church (which is one family) all benefit by the gifts of each. No one has all the gifts—apostleship, prophecy, teaching, miracles, healing, helps, governments, tongues; but each should desire “the greater gifts” (xii.). (2) One gift transcends all others, namely Love; it transforms all the rest, and without it all the rest are vain (xiii.). (3) The gifts most to desire are “spiritual gifts”—*e. g.* prophecy more than “speaking with tongues”; the former being intelligible (a sign for believers), the latter being unintelligible (a sign for unbelievers) and needing an interpreter (xiv. i–25). (4) The exercise of gifts, of whatever nature, should be for the edification of the Church, and all should be done “decently and in order” (xiv. 26–40).

V. THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

(1) *The Witness to Christ's Resurrection* was the foundation of the gospel first preached at Corinth. No resurrection, no gospel (xv. 1–19). (2) *The fact of Christ's Resurrection* gives the hope of His people's resurrection (xv. 20–29). (3) *The risks taken by the Apostles in preaching the Resurrection of Jesus* give strong support to their testimony and ought to shame men who deny it (xv. 29–34). (4) *The Problem of the Resurrection Body* is no difficulty; for (a) God can give a new body

as easily as make different glories of creation, or as He makes living wheat spring from a bare seed (xv. 25-43); (b) it will be a spiritual and heavenly body, not material and earthly, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (xv. 44-50); and (c) we may not all "sleep" (be dead) at the Lord's coming, but we shall all be changed (into the new spiritual body), and "death shall be swallowed up in victory" (xv. 51-58).

VI. THE COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS.

(1) Do as the churches of Galatia are doing—let each lay by on the first day of the week what he can afford to give; and when the time approaches let the churches elect commissioners to carry the gift to Jerusalem (xvi. 1-4); and (2) Paul will, at the same time, make a tour of the churches of Macedonia and Achaia to receive the combined gift, leaving Ephesus at Pentecost and wintering in Achaia (xvi. 5-9).

VII. CONCLUDING COUNSELS.

(1) Encourage Timothy and hasten his return! (2) Understand that Apollos thinks it better not to come to Corinth at present. (3) Stand fast, and accept this as *the all-comprehending advice*: "*Let all things be done in love.*" (4) Esteem highly ministering brethren like Stephanas, whose coming with Fortunatus and Achaicus has been a great

comfort. (5) Priscilla and Aquila send greetings. (6) Paul subscribes to the letter with his own hand the watchword "Maranatha" (the Lord cometh). (7) Benediction (xvi. 10-24).

After receiving this letter, the church in Achaia set about getting ready their share of the collection ("Achaia was ready a year ago"—2 Cor. viii. 10, ix. 2). Meanwhile Timothy returned to Paul to report.

Paul found it necessary to visit Corinth personally and at once. A very sorrowful visit he found it, one which he had no desire to repeat (2 Cor. i. 15-23). Acts gives no hint of this journey: but it would appear that the Apostle went by Macedonia.¹ A great door and effective was opening at Ephesus; the church there presented many delicate problems; and he could ill spare the time. But if the church at Corinth was in great moral danger, as Timothy's report had shown, he must see to it. It might be that his stay there would be prolonged (1 Tim. iii. 14, 15). What was he to do? He decided to put Timothy in charge at Ephesus, and go off at once. To this sudden resolve we owe it that 1 Timothy was written, for the Apostle wrote it from somewhere on this journey, being impressed with Timothy's inexperience and the peculiarly stressing work he would have to do.

¹ 1 Tim. i. 3.

We must pause here to justify our finding as to the date of 1 Timothy and its authenticity. It is one of three called Pastorals—1 and 2 Timothy and Titus—which present features so different from all the other letters of Paul that their genuineness has been doubted and their trustworthy position in the history denied. Of 1 Timothy it must be said that it bears very simple and direct evidence as to its date. One sentence alone prevents it being put anywhere else than here, if it is genuine, “Let no man despise thy youth”—1 Tim. iv. 12 (cf. 1 Cor. xvi. 11). There is no other occasion, so far as we know, on which Timothy could be left behind in charge of Ephesus while Paul *hoped* to be able to return soon (i. 3; iii. 14, 15), and at the same time while Timothy might be despised for his youth. If he was ordained at thirty (Jewish custom forbade earlier public work) some four years ago, he would be thirty-four—the same as Paul himself, twenty-odd years ago, when he was “a young man called Saul” (Acts vii. 58).

“But the pastoral letters are so different in style, in vocabulary, and, in reference to Church affairs and religious ideas, of a type too advanced for the times,” say those who dispute their genuineness. All we can say here is that if three things are granted, their right to be considered genuine must be maintained. These three things are (1) That these letters were *written by Paul’s own hand*,

while all others were written by an amanuensis, who had more to do with the composition than we are in these days apt to think; (2) that they were *private letters*, not intended to be read by or to the churches,—confidential, intimate, aiming at making the correspondents fit for their work; in fact, like an old minister's talk in the study with young men who have been in closest touch with him and his work for years; and (3) that these young men were at the moment face to face with conflicting *cross-currents of religious faith and customs quite new in the history of gospel-preaching hitherto*. If these three conditions are granted, these letters were bound to differ vastly from the other Pauline letters. The writer and the reader had been so intimately associated, in daily touch hitherto, that even their manner of conversation differed from their public manner; they talked of Church affairs as they could not talk in public as yet. Moreover, the religious speech of Asia and the "reasonings" in the lecture-room of Tyrannus had added to their vocabulary. With these remarks we let 1 Timothy speak for itself.

1 Timothy.

Written near the date of 1 Cor. (in A.D. 55), this letter, in which experience lovingly counsels inexperience (in confidence), suggests A PICTURE OF MINISTERIAL AND CHURCH LIFE AT EPHESUS. It speaks of men preaching

a "different doctrine" from Paul's, self-styled "teachers of the law" (Jews), and babblers of a vain "knowledge" (Gentiles); also of extreme men who insisted on abstinence, some from "meats," others "from marriage"; and of Christian teachers whose "different doctrine" was a mere excuse for money-making (by demanding fees like Ephesian lecturers). These are referred to here and there during the course of the letter. Two Christians are recalled to Timothy's mind who had to be excommunicated for "making shipwreck of the Faith"—an example to be feared; but in this connection Paul, recalling his own injurious youth, expresses confidence in Timothy, whose "youth" made a more hopeful start.

Some Counsels he offers.—To be "a good minister" Timothy must be an example of *personal religion*, must attend to *reading, preaching, teaching*, and must always keep alive the gift symbolized by the laying on of hands—*the gift of the Spirit*.

In social life he should treat the older men and women as fathers and mothers, the younger men and women as brothers and sisters (precisely the advice suitable to a young minister); he must see that *widows* are relegated, those with families to their home duties, others to prayer and good works; and none of them are to be on the widow's roll under sixty. *Young women* should be encouraged to marry (from which it

is clearly seen that moral conditions at Ephesus were very different from those at Corinth, where Paul rather advised Christian virgins not to marry "in the circumstances"—1 Cor. vii. 26). As to *women's behaviour in church*, they should be studiously modest in attire and should not be invited to speak. (In this respect, in view of Greek custom, the conditions were the same in Ephesus as in Corinth.) Christian *slaves* should give their masters good service and hope to win them, being themselves "believing and beloved." *Church officials*.—*Bishops* should be without reproach within the church and of good report outside it. *Deacons*, who have a higher degree in prospect, should not be appointed without testing. Both bishops and deacons should be such as order well their families. *Elders*, especially preaching and teaching elders, should be held in honour, and no charge against them should be listened to unless two or three witnesses prove it. *Preacher and people* should dread "the love of money," be "ready to distribute" their riches, and be careful to lay hold of eternal wealth. *Pulpit ministration* should never omit two things:—(1) *Prayer* should be made for all men (Jew and Gentile—of every race, rank, region), for God willeth all men to be saved; and (2) *Preaching* should never forget that "the Church of the Living God" is a Temple of Truth, different in its whole structure (column and connecting-stay) from

heathen temples with their "mysteries."
 For (iii. 16) "By common consent great is
 THE MYSTERY OF OUR RELIGION,¹ Who was
 Manifested *in flesh*—justified *in Spirit* ;
 Known by sight to *angels*—preached to *all*
mankind ;

Believed on *in the World*—received up *in*
Glory."

These three doublets, each a contrast of temporal and eternal, together express The Great Truth, JESUS—CHRIST, bridging the chasm between the seen and the unseen. This is the Christian preacher's one great thought.

Herein we notice only one reference of historical import. "Deacons" are referred to for the first time since Acts told us of the Seven. The next reference is in Titus, and the next in Philippians (in Rom. xvi. 1 a "deaconess" at Cenchrea is mentioned). There can be no difficulty in accepting this testimony that these officials were in the Church from the first, wherever they were needed.

After writing to Timothy, Paul, visiting the chief Macedonian churches "by the way," reached Corinth and had that painful inter-

¹ In this saying (which may well have been a verse of a Christian hymn) Paul holds up to his inexperienced substitute the attractiveness of the Christ-Jesus mystery as compared with rival mysteries in Ephesus. Let the preacher's heart be filled with *this* thought, and he must succeed.

view with the church there which he did not wish to repeat (2 Cor. i. 23 ; ii. 1 ; xiii. 2). Anything we know of it is from 2 Corinthians, and its nature can be guessed from Paul's references there.

How did the Apostle return? By way of Macedonia, or by sea across the Ægean? He was not given to retracing his steps unless to impart some lesson urgently needed. We conclude he returned by sea, because this is the time when he must have written "Titus," and the references in the letter can be best understood on the assumption that the Apostle returned to Ephesus by a ship that had sailed to Crete and thence to Miletus, the port of Ephesus. Paul saw just enough of the Christian Church in Crete, on that occasion, to make him resolve to leave Titus behind to set things in order (Titus i. 4). He returned to Ephesus, having employed his leisure on the voyage writing a letter to Titus, just as to Timothy, instructing him how to act.

This letter was finished on arrival at Ephesus, and probably sent off by the hand of Apollos and Zenas the lawyer.

*Titus.*¹

We gather from the letter that there were many families of Christians in Crete at this

¹ In a text-book for Bible Classes published by the United Free Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, and entitled "The Early Gentile Christian Church," the

time (i. 6-11; ii. 1-10). Discipline was much needed among them, but had been much neglected. There had evidently been no attempt at church organization, especially of Gentiles. Paul had left Titus to do what he could to get things right. He says to Titus what he said to Timothy: "Let no man despise thee"; for he feels he is taking a serious step in putting these young men into positions of authority. He writes to Titus as one who may have to carry on the work, yet says, that if and when a substitute (Tychicus or Artemas) can be sent Titus is to hurry over to Nicopolis and join him, for he is to winter there, which remark, similar to 1 Cor. xvi. 6, indicates that Paul still hopes to carry out his plan. Moreover Titus is asked to attend to the wants of Apollos and Zenas the lawyer as they pass.

This reference to Apollos is interesting. He had been assisting Paul while the lecture-room of Tyrannus was leased. Now after two years of strenuous propaganda there, Paul was about to encourage his many helpers by a missionary tour of Asia; for "all Asia was hearing the Word of the Lord." Furthermore he was

present writer treated "Titus" as outside the period dealt with in Acts. He now sees how much Acts omits; and that it neither bids nor forbids the placing of "Titus" here. But the internal evidence fits it in this place in history.

concerning himself with getting the collection for the saints taken up in the churches that were being formed. So he bade Apollos farewell, and approved of Zenas the lawyer being his companion, with Jerusalem and other great centres of the faith in the Dispersion for their objectives. For now it was plain that not anti-Christian Jews, but pro-Christian Jews who held passionately by the observance of the Law, were the danger to Christianity. "Hebrews" was written for such, but would as yet be only in preparation, so to speak, by repeated arguments.

But the state of the church at Corinth had not been finally composed by Paul's short visit, and news had reached him that gave him great pain. There was one person there tolerated in the membership whose conduct was unworthy and the Church as a body had not the courage to deal with him. Paul was earnestly desired to come and with his great authority put matters right. He would appear to have signified to the messenger that so he would. But, somewhere in Asia, "a great affliction befell," he says in 2 Cor. i. 8, 9; "we were weighed down exceedingly beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life." It is difficult to decide whether Paul himself or Luke, his beloved physician, had a serious illness. The unnamed amanuensis that wrote 2 Corinthians, never mentions Luke by name (either here in i. 8, 9, or later at viii. 18, where he is

plainly referred to in laudatory terms). But it was such an affliction as caused Paul's delay in going, so much so that his critics at Corinth charged him with breach of faith.

In the midst of this affliction he wrote a letter (now lost) to Corinth, a severe letter; and this he arranged should be delivered by Titus. He sent Artemas, in accordance with his prearranged plan (for Tychicus remained with him—Titus iii. 12) with instructions to take up Titus' work in Crete and request the latter to go at once to Corinth, read there the letter, deal with the case and come to Asia and report. This letter, presented to the church at Corinth, is twice referred to in 2 Corinthians (i. 23—ii. 1-4, 9; and vii. 5-8). He would rather not visit them again till he had proof of their good faith.

Titus made all haste to deal with this delicate situation, but was delayed, probably by having to wait for a ship from Crete to Corinth. Meanwhile Paul, when the affliction was past, proceeded on his mission to the cities of Asia. "When I came to Troas" (an Asian city), he says in 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13, "for the gospel of Christ" [that is, on mission work], "and a door was opened unto me in the Lord, I had no relief for my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them I went forth into Macedonia." He crossed the sea to meet Titus. Titus came at last and they met at Philippi, apparently; and when the soul-tortured Paul

heard of the becoming conduct of the church at Corinth and their obedience, the rebound of his spirit was immense (2 Cor. vii. 5-7).

Two duties he must now attend to before recrossing the sea to Asia to finish the work he was engaged in. The first was to write 2 Corinthians, which he set about at once, and the other was to complete the collection for the saints in Jerusalem which was being gathered from their Gentile brethren in all churches. The first of these duties he performed (Timothy the amanuensis?¹) as a supplement to his first letter, with great thoroughness. Both letters are such that the central part of each letter might be used to send to other churches (as "Romans" was being prepared—see p. 237). The second was done

¹ Timothy is here suggested as having been Paul's private secretary, so to speak. Luke, whom we should otherwise have suggested, had his hands full (as we think), providing Scriptures for the increasing Churches; and Timothy was always with Paul when the Pauline letters (except the Pastorals) were written, even "Galatians," if our conjecture is correct, that he was the messenger who brought news from Lystra to Antioch and brought back the letter. The Pastorals, of course, are not included in "the Pauline letters." Timothy was absent when they were written (p. 212 ff.). If Timothy was amanuensis of 2 Cor. (as well as 1 Cor.), why does he omit Luke's name in 2 Cor. viii. 18? He does better, he refers to him as the man whose praise was in every man's mouth, a man well known to the Corinthians for his services. Moreover if Luke were the amanuensis of 1 and 2 Cor. we should look for medical terms; for an amanuensis had influence on style and terms.

with great care and thoughtfulness. Timothy and Erastus were being sent to the Macedonian churches (Acts xix. 22), Titus, Luke and another are also detailed to complete the collection in Achaia (2 Cor. viii. 18). Paul himself, having returned, "stayed in Asia for a while," to supervise the Asian liberality and await the deputy from Galatia, Gaius of Derbe. The part allotted to Luke and Titus is of course not even hinted at in Acts.

This second letter to the Corinthians shows what Titus' report had been. A strong Judaizing party had entered the church of Corinth. They questioned Paul's authority as an Apostle, very much as had been done in Galatia after his first mission there. They were endeavouring to wean away from the Gentile Christian fellowship those Jews that had joined it. They had so criticized Paul that he resolved to answer their charges and innuendoes.

2 Corinthians.

The letter is written in Macedonia, in A.D. 56, as from Paul and Timothy.

I. INTRODUCTION.—Apology for delay in coming to them; it was due to a great affliction (an illness?) in Asia, deliverance from which he partly ascribes to their prayers (i. 3-11). They are now a source of rejoicing to him (i. 12-14).

II. HIS RECENT MOVEMENTS.

(1) He had intended to pay a second visit, to

give a second "benefit" (apart from the long stay at the founding of the church), but forbore to come "again," a second time, in sorrow—i. 15-24. (2) The letter sent by Titus (now lost) had caused as much sorrow to write as to read—ii. 1-4. (3) He now desires them to deal kindly with, and forgive, the sinner therein referred to, as he himself will do—ii. 5-11. (4) He found an open door at Troas but could not use it, being anxious as to Titus' non-arrival, and has gone forward at Macedonia. Now he is triumphing—ii. 12-19.

III. APOLOGY FOR HIS GREAT ANXIETY.

1. *An Apostle's Credentials are his Converts*—iii.—(1) Though his sufficiency is of God, yet they are his "living letters of commendation." (2) His work is a "ministration of the Spirit," and the test of that is that its influence lasts in converts: the glory on Moses' face passed away, but the glory of the Spirit in the human heart never passes away. The Christian becomes in spirit like his Lord.

2. *An Apostle's Own Life should Commend Him*—iv. 1-6.—Things of shame he renounces, things of truth he upholds, and thus commends himself to every conscience. His message is rejected by men blinded by the god of this world, but he himself lives and moves in a shining light—"the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

3. *An Apostle is merely Human, his Master is Divine*—iv. 7—v. 10.—The human servant

is weak; the Divine Master is his strength. The life of Jesus is manifested in his mortal flesh. He believes and therefore speaks, because he knows that Jesus is raised from the dead. Though the outward man (his body) is decaying, the inward man (his spirit) is being daily renewed. He looks not at the seen and temporal, but at the unseen and eternal. While his body is but a decaying residence, his spirit has an enduring home, and he seeks to please God in view of judgment to come.

4. *An Apostle is Christ's Ambassador*—v. 11—vii. 1.—His actions are explained by the love of Christ constraining him, whereby he is compelled to preach the gospel of reconciliation, and commends himself to men, as Christ's ambassador, by his life—his willingness to suffer and his readiness to serve. This is the reason why he has been calling them to live separate from unbelievers, idolaters, and the unclean.

5. *An Apostle's Joy is to hear such News as Titus has brought*—vii. 2—16.—Till Titus came he had been in great distress: "without were fightings, within were fears." But now Titus' news of the converts in Corinth has given great joy, for the news is that they are obedient and of good spirit. He had been sorry for writing them such a letter, now he is glad that they too sorrowed "after a godly sort." The joy of Titus concerning them is infectious, and Paul has exceeding joy. He

had boasted of them to Titus and "it is found to be truth!"

IV. THE GENTILE CHURCHES' COMMON FUND.

1. *The Collection for the Poor Saints* in Jerusalem is a great success in the churches of Macedonia. First they gave their own selves to the Lord, and now they exceeded their power in eagerness to give to this fund, and in this they had been stimulated by the example of Corinth, beginning more than a year ago. Accordingly, Titus is now being sent back to Corinth to *complete the collection*—viii. 1-7.

2. *The Principles of Christian Giving*—viii. 8-24.—(1) The collection is not commanded, only expedient; it is requested as a token of Christian love, and Jesus is the example, "Who for your sakes became poor"—8, 9. (2) Being willingly begun, it should be heartily completed—10, 11. (3) The measure of one's giving is one's ability—12. (4) Giving should not be to ease some at the expense of others, but to equalize resources in the Church; abundance of gifts here supplying the lack there, and abundance of gifts there supplying the lack here, "that there may be equality." (5) This Central Fund of the churches needs organization and commendation; therefore three deputies are now being sent to the churches of Achaia—*Titus*, who is keen to go on the errand; *Luke*, his "brother," "whose praise is in all the

churches," and who has been appointed one of the Macedonian delegates to Jerusalem (from Philippi), and *another*, a delegate of great experience. (6) It is essential that in dealing with the finances of the Church "things honourable" should be provided in the sight of all men as well as of God. *Publicity* is provided for through these deputies; and if *authority* for collecting is needed, the authority of Titus is that he is Paul's "fellow-worker to you-ward" (a Gentile minister of the gospel to a church mainly Gentile), and the authority of the other two is that they are already the elected "apostles of the churches" in this same matter.

3. *Reasons for Liberal Giving to the Collection*—ix.—(1) It will be fulfilling reasonable expectations. Paul had "boasted" to Macedonia of Achaia's readiness, and thereby stimulated a generous response. It would put him to shame, if the Macedonians found his boastings vain. Therefore these three deputies are sent ahead to make sure. (2) It is a matter of bounty, not of extortion. But (a) who sows bountifully reaps also bountifully; (b) God loves a cheerful giver; (c) God will reward. (3) It will relieve saints in want; but in doing so (a) it will show that Gentile Christians are indeed Christ's disciples; (b) it will make a strong bond between Gentile and Jewish brethren; (c) it will make all "thank God for *His* unspeakable gift."

V. DEFENCE OF HIS APOSTLESHIP—x., xi.

1. *He has been charged with walking "according to the flesh"*; and his answer is (1) Though walking *in* the flesh, he does not war *according to* the flesh. (2) As others, so he also is Christ's; but will not press his authority received from Christ, though his critics admit that his letters are powerful. (3) He will not compare himself with others, but wait for God's approval—x. 1-18.

2. *False Apostles* (deceitful workers, self-appointed apostles of Christ) would lead them from simplicity and truth. Therefore (1) let them be warned by the subtle beguiling of Eve. (2) Let their first teacher advise: was *he* behind the chiefest Apostles when he came to you? Did he degrade his office when he preached without salary? (3) Satan himself may pose as an angel of light—xi. 1-15.

3. *Paul may boast with the best of them.*—It is very foolish, but he is compelled to it. (1) He is as much a Jew as any of those compared with him or criticizing him. (2) He is much more a minister of Christ than any of them, in respect of missionary labour, suffering, risks to life, heavy undertakings in gospel preaching, and wonderful escapes by God's care of him—xi. 16-33. (3) He has had visions and revelations from the Lord, but sufferings also in the flesh to counter-balance them; in particular "a thorn (stake) in the flesh" has been an abiding cross,

which, however, God has given him daily strength to bear, so that his chief glory is in that weakness of his over which the power of Christ triumphs. (4) In short, "the signs of an Apostle" were wrought among them, as they knew very well. The only non-Apostle-like thing they could point to was that he did not burden them by accepting salary. They surely could forgive him for doing them this wrong!—xii. 1-13.

VI. HIS PROPOSED MOVEMENTS.

(1) He is coming the third time, not to be a burden, nor yet to catch them with guile, but to act in the same spirit as Titus had just now shown among them. (2) He fears that he will find evils in the church that he must deal with sternly and powerfully. But he would rather not; and this is why he sends this letter with Titus—to produce the proper Christian spirit and life before he comes—xii. 14—xiii. 10.

VII. SALUTATIONS—xiii. 11-14.

One result of this letter was that Titus was chosen to represent the churches of Achaia, as one of the Gentile "Apostles of the churches," his brother Luke perhaps representing Philippi, with whose infant church he had most to do (but Epaphras may have done this—Phil. 2, 25-30).

Now draws to a close the mission to Ephesus

and Asia. Acts has one more episode to tell, which happened "about that time"—the Uproar at Ephesus. Whether it happened before or after the collection was ready is a question difficult to decide; but as the author regards it as the beginning of a series of determined efforts to compass Paul's death, he reserves it for the next section. He closes this section with a reference to the extraordinary power of the Apostle. As he closed the second section of his history by noting the belief of the people of Jerusalem in Peter's powers—belief that his shadow could cure—so he closes the seventh by noting how the people in Asia believed in Paul's powers—belief in the touch of his clothes. There was a guild of magicians, very powerful in the popular esteem, and one of them, a Jew named Sceva, had seven sons engaged in this lucrative profession. Two of them thought to exorcise an evil spirit, by naming "Jesus whom Paul preacheth," whereupon the man with the evil spirit, saying "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?" leaped on them and mastered both of them. This became known to Jew and Gentile in Ephesus, and greatly increased Paul's reputation. But, best of all, many of that class became followers of Christ and publicly burned the books of their art, to the value of 30,000 pieces of silver. "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed."

This ending of the section is not without a

definite suggestion that the Word of God, copied with industrious care, by Luke and his confederates for the use of the churches in Asia and elsewhere, was more mighty by far than any Ephesian books. For the years have been bringing an increasing amount of Scripture-writing, which we must keep in mind. But it also means that the Word was progressing everywhere—the Church increasing in all the Dispersion.

SECTION VIII A

(Contemporary with Acts xix. 21—xxiv. 23, Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Philip-pians, and Philemon)

PAUL OPPOSED BY ATTEMPTS ON HIS LIFE : HIS IMPRISONMENT

The eighth section of Acts begins at the time when Paul was intensely interested in the collection for poor saints in which all his churches (except the Syrian, whose contribution was sent ten years ago) were taking part. But not a word about it is said in Acts; for it would not benefit Paul's case in Rome to describe that event. In the interests of this collection Timothy and Erastus were organizing the Macedonian churches, Titus and Luke the Achaian. Gaius of Derbe had

arrived in Ephesus with Galatia's contribution. Paul himself had been organizing for it in the Asian church, and was gathering his "travel-companions" (those still in Asia) at the capital, Ephesus. His mind was full of the anticipation of seeing Rome after his journey to the Holy City. But his plans for further missionary enterprise were upset by a new, secretly organized and implacably determined, opposition of unbelieving Jews.

This section, by far the longest in the book of Acts, is mainly concerned to tell the reader this opposition. The last two sections had dealt with oppositions, but in each an authoritative decision had brought them to an end. Riots had been quelled by the Jerusalem Christian Council; actions at law ceased after Gallio's decision; and the charges of sedition and lawlessness against the Apostle may be regarded as answered by these narratives. But there is no authoritative decision in this third case. That has yet to come. More to the point also, if the Roman judge should ask why, if all this story is true, was Paul arrested and charged, in effect this new section answers, "I will tell you why. His enemies had vowed to have his life; they made many attempts at it, one following another, as I shall show; and it was because at last they were caught in the act that they formed these charges, to save themselves."

Let us pursue the story. The first attempt to assassinate the Apostle, during this period,

was in the uproar at Ephesus. The uproar was raised by certain tradesmen, but that it was planned so as to draw the Apostle into the turmoil from which he would never have come out alive is plainly to be seen. Gaius and Aristarchus, two of the deputies of the churches, were seized and dragged into the theatre. Alexander (the coppersmith?), a Jew, tried to get a hearing, doubtless intending to dissociate the Jews as a class from Paul and his teaching; but his words were drowned in the noise. Paul, anxious for his friends, would have gone into the theatre, but his disciples held him back, and certain Asiarchs (friends of the Emperor, and friends of Paul too) begged him not to venture. They feared that the death of a Roman citizen in a public uproar would lose to the town the rights of being a free city. The town-clerk quieted the mob by this reflection. But it was patent to all that had Paul gone in, he had met his death, and the actual assassin would not have been found. For all the attempts to kill him were of that order—secret murder, murder in the dark of confusion and noise, or murder at sea leaving no trace.

When the uproar was over and his "travel-companions" restored in safety, Paul called a meeting of his disciples and gave them counsel, bade them farewell and "departed to go into Macedonia"; by what route he kept secret, nor did they that lay in wait for him discover. For from this time onward his

safety had to be provided for. He had originally intended to spend almost a year revisiting the Macedonian and Achaian churches from Pentecost of one year to Passover of the next. He had signified this intention to the church of Corinth (1 Cor. xvi. 5-9). He had paid them a visit since then and had thought to pay a second, going first to Corinth and then to Macedonia and back again to Corinth for embarkation to Jerusalem (2 Cor. i. 15, 16). As it happened, however, the order was reversed. He went from Asia into Macedonia by the same route as he had entered it on that first visit when he was hustled by persecution. This time he means to "fully preach the Gospel" right across from the Ægean to the Adriatic. He had of course made a visit to the main churches when he passed to visit Corinth some two years ago. But there had been little time then. He had been planning for this extended visit. All that Acts says is that "when he had gone through those parts and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece" and spent three months there. This statement represents nearly a year's work altogether. The Macedonian visit included many new churches, and led the Apostle to Illyricum, whence he would enter Greece by way of Nicopolis. The strenuousness and thoroughness of this mission can be imagined. "I have fully preached the Gospel," said Paul to the Romans (Rom. xv. 19), "even unto

Illyricum." Greece (Achaia) offered many congregations besides Corinth, where the Gospel of the Uncircumcision was in force, and they had to be visited.

We suppose that the Apostle and his travel-companions foregathered in Greece. The Apostle would carry out his idea of wintering in Nicopolis. He would again be surrounded by his familiar attendants, Luke, Titus and Timothy; and he had made a number of new friends recently—friends to aid him in his labours with the pen—Aristarchus, one Tertius from Thessalonica (Rom. xvi. 22) and others. For Paul had found the secret of the preservation of the faith among men. Wherever he went he supplied the churches with Scriptures. He had Mark's and Luke's Gospels in circulation, besides the Old Testament. He had also a new business in hand, which would give employment to men skilled with the pen. He had formed a plan of preparing a general letter which might be sent to the leading church of a province, dealing with questions that had been, and still were, and for many a day would be agitating the minds of members of the Jew-Gentile Church. He had the care of all the churches on him. They looked to him for counsel in every difficulty, for settlement of disputes, and for general guidance. He saw himself overwhelmed by the very success of the mission. If churches were all to make the demands upon him and Luke (or whoever

might be his amanuensis) that Corinth had done, life would be intolerable. Yet the questions submitted to him by young churches were largely confined to a few subjects. He saw that difficulties and disputes might be prevented or removed if these churches, composed largely of Jews, though mostly of Gentiles, had in their hands a letter from his pen which should set forth the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, from the points of view of both the Jew and the Gentile, showing the historical, doctrinal, and practical bearings of this teaching, and enforcing it with such arguments and precepts as his twenty years' experience of Gospel-preaching might suggest. To this might be added general rules for the settlement of such questions of conduct as had already arisen—*e.g.* obedience to civil government, eating certain meats, and fellowship between Jew and Gentile in the Church. He prepared a carefully thought-out document of this nature which, without the alteration of a single word, could be sent to any or all of "the churches of the Gentiles." It is preserved for us in the Epistle to the Romans. If the opening passage (i. 1-17) and the closing passages (xv. 14 to the end) be removed from this Epistle, there is left just such a treatise (for it is a treatise) as we have described; and (as we learn later) the church in Rome was not the only one to which it was sent in the form of a letter. In truth, the Epistle to the

Romans, as we have it, has embedded in it *a General Epistle of Paul*, the study of which by Jews and Gentiles in the early Church, and by Christians in all ages, has brought light to the feet and the shining of a lamp upon the path. Its grand central truth is that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ and by no other means whatever; and on that truth light is made to play in such a way that the reader feels himself taught as by the Spirit of God. It must have cost the Apostle many a prayerful hour to prepare, for it is marked everywhere by devout thinking and literary care. It would be in course of preparation before he left Asia, but would be finished in Macedonia or Achaia.

It is the character and contents of the bulk of "Romans" that declare it a general epistle. It was not, however, addressed, like the General Epistles of Peter, to an aggregate of churches in certain provinces. The treatise was sent to each individual church as kernel of a separate letter, with a preface in the usual form: "Paul to the church of so-and-so," and with an appendix suitable to that church—dealing with matters concerning itself alone, sending greetings to members prominent in it or from brethren well known to it, and closing with some form of benediction. When the New Testament Canon was being fixed, it seemed absurd to include in complete form the several letters that repeated word for word this kernel-treatise. The letter Paul

addressed to the Romans was given complete, because its preface was unusually long, being his introduction of himself to a church "unknown by face." It ends with the last words of chapter xv.—"Now the God of peace be with you. Amen." But the closing passages of others of these treatise-letters were added after the close of the "Romans" one. Thus there appear in our English Bible a succession of letter-endings—at xv. 33, xvi. (16?), 20, 24, 27. In some ancient MSS. there had been others—as at the close of xiv.

(1) xvi. 1–20 seems to be the ending of the letter sent to *Ephesus or Asia*, for among the many Christian friends to whom greetings are sent—whose great number may be explained by Paul's long-continued work in Asia—there occur at the head of the list the names of Prisca and Aquila, and Epænetus, "the first-fruits of Asia."

(2) If a MS., ancient and good, should disclose that the benediction had occurred at verse 16, then xvi. 17–20, both by the nature of its contents and by the absence of greetings, would suggest the ending of the treatise handed over *at Corinth* to the *Corinthian* church.

(3) xvi. 21–24 points almost with certainty to *Macedonia* as the region from which or to which (possibly both from and to which) one such letter was sent; for Jason of Thessalonica and Sosipater of Berea (Acts xx. 4)

send greetings as persons well known to the readers, while both Timothy and Erastus, who had gone together to Macedonia to prepare for Paul's coming (Acts xix. 22), also send greetings. The penman of this letter gives his own name, *Tertius*, and sends greetings from *Quartus* his brother, which fact reminds us that *Secundus* (Acts xx. 4) was a delegate to Jerusalem from Thessalonica.

(4) xvi. 25-27, the Doxology, is an unusual ending for a letter of Paul's, but its swelling grandeur well befits the close of the treatise itself, and may have been placed last of all for that reason when the Canon was fixed.

Thus is explained a peculiar feature of our Epistle to the Romans—namely, the various benedictory endings, the long list of persons greeted or greeting, etc. These for certain scholars have cast doubt on the trustworthiness of the whole. One needs no special scholarship to see the unreasonableness of such doubt in view of this simple explanation.

When or whence the various forms of this "General Epistle" of Paul were dispatched, we cannot say, except that it would be during this winter, when Paul was about to proceed to a new mission in the West, Rome and Spain. It would serve to guide all his churches in one sense. We cannot be wrong in concluding that one at least was sent to each of the churches of the Gentiles founded by Paul,—Macedonia, Achaia, Asia, Galatia, Phrygia and doubtless Syria-Cilicia. It would

be suitable to them all, although Ephesus and Asia, as we shall see, got an additional general letter. There can be no doubt, however, about the one sent to Rome (namely Rom. i.-xv.); for Paul was ready to set out for Jerusalem with the gift, in the spring of A.D. 57, with Rome in view (Rom. xv. 23 ff). It was therefore sent from Achaia (Nicopolis or Corinth).

From this date onwards we need no help outside Acts to conceive the history. In less than two months Paul will be a prisoner on his trial; and the record in Acts is of the successive attempts upon his life. The second attempt was a plot of Jews to murder him at sea. This was discovered when the deputies were ready to embark with him. He outwitted them by changing his plans. He resolved to go north through Macedonia to Troas and sail from there. He had with him Luke and Titus ("we"); but the rest crossed with the ship to the other side of the Ægean, and there left it, proceeding north to meet Paul at Troas.

The names of the "apostles of the churches" are given in Acts xx. 4, all but the two whose names are never mentioned in Acts, but whose presence together is indicated here by "we": from *Macedonia*, Sopater (or Sosipater) of Beroëa, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica; from *Galatia*, Gaius of Derbe and Timothy of Lystra; from *Asia*, Tychicus and

Trophimus ("The Ephesian," xxi. 29). Titus would represent *Achaia*, and Luke had been elected to represent Philippi (2 Cor. viii. 19).

Acts lingers on the case of Eutychus at Troas, putting in the story as a balance to that of Dorcas. The Apostle is brought to Miletus, whither he summons the elders of Ephesus. His speech to them is the only speech of Paul recorded in Acts delivered to an altogether friendly audience, and the only picture there of his communion with his converts. It is told probably to let the Roman reader get an idea of Paul's manner of life in Ephesus, concerning which his Asiarch friends will be able to witness. Here, and all through the voyage, we are left with the impression that the plot against his life was known to be part of a determined purpose of the Jews to compass his death somehow. To these elders Paul said: "I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more"; and they quite accepted this view, for they did not believe that Paul would come out of Jerusalem alive, as he had escaped in Ephesus. So bitter had the Jewish malice become.

At Tyre, the party had a seven days' wait, and the Christians there (for all Syria had been evangelized) said "through the Spirit" that Paul "should not set foot in Jerusalem." The knowledge of the Jewish purpose was known there too.

Finally reaching Cæsarea, the end of the

voyage, the prophet Agabus, in real Jewish prophet's fashion, took Paul's girdle and bound his own feet and hands saying, "Thus saith the Holy Spirit, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle." It is to be noted that neither the foreboding that Paul's face would be seen no more nor the forecast that the Jews would bind him was literally fulfilled; but the forecast showed how well aware men were of the plot against Paul's life. When the nine deputies heard this saying of Agabus they and the native Christians "besought him not to go up to Jerusalem." But Paul was not to be turned from his mission.

Arrived in Jerusalem "the brethren received the Gentile deputies gladly"; and next day James and the elders of Jerusalem met to receive the gift of the Gentiles, Paul rehearsing what God had done among the Gentiles by his ministry. An interesting and memorable scene this was; but Acts passes it over, to give attention to what followed. For it had everything to do with the reason for Paul's being on his trial.

It was a suggestion of James, doubtless having been agreed upon by the Apostles and elders beforehand. There were four men who, having performed all the other ritual of a vow, were ready to perform the last week's requirement in the Temple if, as the law allowed, some one able to pay the excessive Temple fees would join them at that stage,

paying the fees for all and performing the vow with them. James proposed that Paul should be that person and perform a vow after the strict manner of a Jew. "For," said he, "you see there are myriads of Christian Jews in Jerusalem whom this will greatly mollify. They have consented to the decrees requiring Gentile Christians only to abstain from the four things, but they have never consented to relax observance of Jewish rites by Jewish Christians; and they will not. They have heard that you have been teaching Jewish parents who have become Christians not to circumcise their children. They had consented not to blame you for not Judaizing Gentiles, but this is Gentilizing Jews; and their wrath is great." It was vain for Paul to explain that he taught his converts to abide in their calling, when they became Christians—Gentiles to remain as Gentiles, Jews as Jews (1 Cor. vii. 18). He ultimately consented and went to spend the next seven days in the Temple, performing the last stage of a vow.

His chief enemies were of course non-Christian Jews, who, however, had worked upon Pharisee Christians on the strength of this rumour with success. Ere the week was out they had all their plans laid. Agents were stationed in places throughout the crowd of worshippers in the Temple; and a great crowd was ready outside. As soon as the moment for action came, when Paul

was in the crowd of worshippers almost ready to finish the vow, they seized him, shouted that he had profaned the Temple by bringing a Gentile within courts not open to him. Jews from Asia were on the spot to testify that they had seen him with Trophimus, an Ephesian, who was one of Paul's travel-companions (but that was in the city a week ago). The agents stirred up the people everywhere, and the question *when* they had seen him could neither be put nor answered in the confusion. They hustled him outside the Temple and the doors were shut—many sincere friends shut in, Paul shut out with the clamouring mob. They would have him quickly dragged outside the city and stoned.

But quickly came the Roman Chief-Captain with soldiers, no doubt at once informed by watchful friends of Paul. With difficulty he rescued Paul from their hands, and carried him off to the guard-house. There Paul got leave to speak from the steps to the throng. He spoke in Hebrew, thus getting a silent hearing while he told of his past, of his conversion, and of his God-given commission to preach to the *Gentiles*. He got no farther than the word "Gentiles"; the crowd became wildly excited, clamouring for his life. Whereupon the Chief-Captain interfered and took him into the guard-house; but, not having understood Paul's speech in Hebrew, he gave orders to have him examined by

scourging. In this he was arrested by Paul's claim to be a Roman citizen.

It being now out of the question to extract information from the prisoner by torture, the Chief-Captain thought to get at the meaning of it all by calling a meeting of the Sanhedrin and placing Paul before them to be tried. When Paul began to speak, the High-priest bade bystanders smite him on the mouth, but Paul exclaimed, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall! Sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and biddest me be smitten contrary to the law?" Paul knew Jewish law. But when there came the remark, "Revilest thou God's High-priest," he at once apologized, saying he was not aware that it was the High-priest that had spoken, and that it was (according to the law) wrong for one to speak evil of a ruler of the people. He then sharply divided the Sanhedrin by saying that he stood there for "the hope and the resurrection of the dead." As he expected, this antagonized Sadducees and Pharisees. They were divided in opinion. The Pharisees found no fault with him. But the dissension was so great that the Chief-Captain, "fearing he might be torn in pieces," ordered his soldiers to take him back to the guard-house.

Thinking on his position that night, Paul had the comfort of the Lord. He did not hope for acquittal, except by the exercise of his right of appeal to Cæsar. It cheered

him to think that, as he had witnessed to his Master in Jerusalem, so he would in Rome. Not in the way he had intended, but yet in a way that would lead him before "Gentiles and Kings."

The very next day, a plot to assassinate him was revealed to Paul by his nephew. His sister's son was true to him whatever other relatives might be. Forty Jews had taken an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed him. They would ask that he be brought before the Sanhedrin again, and ere he got there he should die. The Chief-Captain, being made aware of this, sent Paul under escort to Cæsarea by night to Felix the Governor.

After a few days, prominent Jews and a barrister named Tertullus, came by the Chief-Captain's orders to accuse Paul. They had to come. They must give good reason for the disturbance of the public peace. To justify their action they had to make charges against the prisoner. But they brought no witnesses. They accused Paul of being "a pestilent fellow, a mover of insurrection among the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, who moreover had assayed to profane the Temple; on whom also they had laid hold." Paul's answer was that they had brought no witnesses, that Jews from Asia should have been there to testify to his profaning the Temple, which he denied. The only thing they accused him

of truly was that he was a Christian, believing all things that were in the Scriptures. In a Roman court the Jewish Scriptures were their legal charter; it was therefore not illegal for him to be a Christian. He had come peaceably to Jerusalem with "alms" for his nation, and he had been fulfilling a vow in the Temple with no crowd and no tumult. Let his accusers bring forward their witnesses to the contrary. Or let the Jews here present testify to any wrongdoing of his that they could testify to except that he did cry in their midst, "Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question." He had done that, and it had led to tumult, but who of them would accuse him of being the tumult-maker?

Felix, knowing too well about Christians, did not decide the case, but said he would do so when Lysias, the Chief-Captain came down. He detained Paul in Herod's "palace," or *prætorium*; but ordered the Centurion in charge to give him the indulgence due to an uncondemned prisoner—freedom to his friends to minister to him.

But Felix never did try the case. He kept Paul there for the "two years" that a Roman could be kept without trial. The Jews were content, and Felix was content to please them.

This last section up to this point is a *tour de force* making plain the real reason why Paul was before Felix at all—the actions of

his accusers, not his own. It has described four attempts to take Paul's life, all of them punishable by law; and it has also given a clear picture of the fact that the people were well aware that Paul ran a great risk of his life by coming to Jerusalem. All this was calculated to exonerate him, and call for inquiry as to the conduct of his accusers. But, as Paul and his attendants must have early seen, it was at Rome rather than at Cæsarea that the statement would be needed (see Section VIII A of the Plan, p. 53 ff.).

Let us pause here to consider events that took place during the "two years" of Paul's imprisonment at Cæsarea.

We have already discussed the planning and writing of the Acts while Paul was at Cæsarea (see Chapter IV). We shall now discuss the question of the "Imprisonment Epistles" as they are called, the letters of Paul written from prison; for they, we believe, were written at Cæsarea.

THE IMPRISONMENT EPISTLES

Consent is general that *Ephesians*, *Colossians*, *Philippians* and *Philemon* are contemporaneous. They are written "in bonds." Ephesians and Colossians are sent by the same messenger, Tychicus; and, in the case of these two, the occasion of writing, "that ye may know our state and that he (Tychicus) may comfort you" (Col. iv. 8; Eph. vi. 22), tallies

with that in Philippians, where the Apostle speaks of having "the same conflict that ye saw in me and *now hear* to be in me," viz. imprisonment by the hands of Romans (Phil. i. 30). Philemon and Colossians name the same six men as being with Paul while he wrote. Philemon and Philippians both speak as if Paul expected to be with them soon. Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon all speak of Epaphras or Epaphroditus as being with him when he wrote. They have several other marks of having a common birth-time.

But the birthplace, whether at Rome or at Cæsarea, has been the subject of dispute. All the *evidence* on the surface is for Cæsarea; all the *arguments* have been for Rome. Splendid exhibitions of learning and labour these arguments have been; but the very need of them in support of Rome, and the ease with which the facts suggest Cæsarea, are striking in comparison. We, for our part, unhesitatingly decide for Cæsarea, depending on the internal evidence, which we shall briefly set forth under four heads: the *Anxiety* evidence, the *Prætorium* evidence, the *Deputy* evidence and the *Faction* evidence.

1. *The Anxiety Evidence.* In all these letters (except Philemon) it is implied that the readers had quite recently heard news of Paul that made them anxious. Anxiety at the first news of his confinement at Cæsarea, where he had to be guarded from assassination, would have largely subsided by the time

he was in Rome, living in his own hired house ; and the conflict which the Philippians saw in him when he was imprisoned on his first visit to their town, and *now hear* that he is suffering from again (namely, imprisonment by Romans) is of quite recent occurrence. The Philippians only now hear of it. This certainly suggests Cæsarea rather than Rome.

2. *The Prætorium Evidence.* It is indeed a curious fact that Paul's reference in Philippians to "his bonds in Christ being manifest to the whole *prætorium*," and the greetings he sends from "them that are of Cæsar's household," should at once strike an attentive reader of Acts as referring to Cæsarea and yet should be the two sayings on which great labour and learning have been expressed to make them point to Rome. Acts says that at Cæsarea Paul was lodged in the *prætorium* (Herod's palace, now Cæsar's palace). "Cæsar's household" meant the Imperial house-establishment in any centre in which Cæsar's representative lived, and not in Rome itself only. Now how can anyone who remembers that Paul spent the days of his imprisonment at Rome in his own hired house, and at Cæsarea in the Imperial palace, imagine for a moment that the Imperial palace in Rome is meant by this reference in Philippians? It is vain to cite Onesimus, a runaway slave, as being more likely to be found in Rome than in some place nearer his home. Rome did not get all the runaway slaves ; and an Asian

runaway slave of a Christian master was less likely to meet Paul in his own hired house in Rome than to meet him on the voyage from Asia to Cæsarea, and to attach himself to Paul's company there.

Thus far we have touched on the evidence hitherto commonly noticed in the controversy on this subject. Two classes of evidence have been practically overlooked, though in our judgment they are the more decisive.

3. *The Deputy Evidence.* Paul, when he was arrested in Jerusalem, had with him nine companions, his travel-companions, "the apostles (or commissioners) of the churches," who had brought the Gentile gift for the saints in Jerusalem. When he was interned in Cæsarea, they most certainly availed themselves of the permission given by Felix, to have any of his friends ministering to him in prison (Acts xxiv. 23). But, when his release was not hoped for within a short time, they would consult with him what they should do; and one thing that would be agreed upon was that the churches which had sent them as delegates should be immediately informed of the situation. One delegate from each pair would return to report; and supposing that Titus was the only deputy from Achaia and therefore must return to Corinth with the news; Sopater and Secundus to Macedonia; Trophimus to Asia; and Gaius to Galatia; then there would be left with Paul Luke,

Aristarchus, Tychicus and Timothy—the very members of the deputation that are mentioned as sending their greetings in these letters. Any four would be remarkable, but that each church (except of course Achaia) should stand by the Apostle at the beginning of his incarceration represented by one of its deputies is more than remarkable. Anyhow, we have these theories to choose between: the Rome theory that Paul drew these deputies after him to Rome and that they were still in his company when he wrote these letters there, notwithstanding that Timothy and Tychicus did not accompany him on the voyage; and the Cæsarea theory, that Paul had these deputies still with him at Cæsarea at the time of writing, but was then sending Tychicus to the Colossians, and promised the Philippians to send Timothy shortly to them; leaving, when they left, just two of the four to accompany him to Rome, Luke and Aristarchus; who, however, were joined by Titus before the voyage. The latter theory has distinctly the advantage of probability; and this evidence of the deputies ought to weigh very heavily. But there is weightier evidence to follow.

4. *The Faction Evidence.* Acts shows that Paul's arrest was due to faction in the Christian Church. There were, as James said, "Myriads of Jews who believed, all zealous for the law": that is, though they were Christians, they were all Jewish Christians;

they could not suffer that Gentile Christians should be let off without performing the rites of Judaism. It was their attitude to Paul that gave the Sadducean party a handle against Paul. "To be a good Christian one must be a good Jew," was their position and, Christian though they reckoned themselves, they were the real persecutors of the Apostle. Now Paul tells the Philippians that his imprisonment has had one very significant effect *in the place where he is writing*, namely, that "most of the brethren in the Lord, trusting to my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of goodwill; the one [party] do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel: but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds." One can see how this might happen in Palestine and at Cæsarea, where inter-Christian faction surged up to the prison walls, so that Paul had to be kept within the prætorium for safety. But the mind fails to conceive it possible in Rome, if the story of Paul's arrival there means anything at all. This Christian faction had hitherto proved inconsiderable and futile, *except in Palestine*.

But there is more faction evidence than this, for in Colossians (iv. 10, 11) Paul remarks *how few* of the Jewish Christians were a great comfort to him. Writing in Rome he

would have thought them many: but in Judæa, with its myriads of Jewish Christians, they were but few. He sends the greetings of Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus Justus, and says, "These fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God are the only ones of the Circumcision who have been a comfort to me." In Rome he would have said, "I have actually three Jewish Christians"; in Cæsarea he would say, "I have *only* these three!" In truth the conclusion is clear. Paul was not in Rome but in Palestine when he wrote Colossians.

Thus, when we put together these four classes of evidence—the evidence of Anxiety, of the Prætorium and Cæsar's household, of the Deputies, and of the inter-Christian Faction—the conclusion is irresistible that the Imprisonment Epistles were written from Cæsarea. Let us glance at them.

Ephesians

Very good ancient MSS. of this letter indicate that copies of it had been in circulation, addressed to "The saints which are at [Blank] and the faithful in Christ Jesus"—a witness that the letter had been treated as a *general* one, the reader introducing the name of the particular church to which it was being read. That this was meant, is shown by the fact that there are no greetings or personal references at the close. But that it was to be read by Tychicus in the

first instance in the churches of Asia seems clear. Tychicus had been kept back at Cæsarea till it was ready. It supplemented the other general letter, "Romans," by using the religious language of Asia, which would not have been easily followed by the other churches. It refers to the mystery of God's Will; the mystery made known to Paul by revelation; the mystery which in all ages hath been hid in God who created all things; the mystery of the mutual love of Christ and His Church; and of that mystery of the gospel which demands utterance with boldness, even by Paul himself, even though as by an ambassador in bonds. This language suited Ephesus and towns in Asia, for the minds of the best people were much attracted by "mystery religion," and Paul had been for three years trying to show them "the truth, as it is in Jesus" (iv. 21)—the great mystery of the Christian religion (1 Tim. iii. 16) that met their aspirations. This letter addresses minds moving on a different plane from those of Corinth or Thessalonica. The letter was necessary as a supplement to the treatise which is preserved to us in Romans, so far as it concerned the influence of the mystery religion. Though he might address Jews, everywhere in all the provinces, with the certainty of being understood, he tried to express his gospel to Gentiles so different as Ephesian and Corinthian, in the religious language that appealed to them.

Colossians

Colossians has much atmosphere of Asia in its diction, like Ephesians. But it has references more especially to the particular church or churches, for it is requested to be read in Laodicea too; and probably was read in Hierapolis. These three churches had been left to the care of Epaphras, at the great movement of two years ago (i. 7, 8; iv. 12, 13); and he happened to be in Cæsarea at the time of writing, having come from Philippi, as we learn from Philippians. For his close connection with the founding of these churches he is called "one of themselves"; not necessarily a native. The letter is intended to enlarge and enforce his teaching. Many had been added to their number since Paul was there (ii. 1). They were a little unsteady as yet in their religious consciousness. They had accepted Christ, but were not just sure of their standing, not being circumcised as proselytes were; but they are assured that Christ is the head of principality and power, and that they were circumcised with "the circumcision of Christ"; that Christ had put off from himself "the principalities and the powers," triumphing over them. Christ was the mystery of God "in Whom are hid the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." They are not to allow themselves to be spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit, the tradition of men. They are not to be tempted

into "voluntary humility and worshipping of angels." They are to *set* their minds on things above, and not on earthly things; for "their life is hid with Christ in God." And so on. New ways of stating familiar truth are found in Colossians—the ways of Asia. He asks their prayers that a door may be opened to him to speak the mystery of Christ. Tychicus is bearer of this letter too; and with him returns to their midst Philemon's runaway slave Onesimus, now a faithful and beloved brother. Luke and Demas, both of whom they will remember as being with him, when the gospel came to them, send their greetings. In conclusion the Laodiceans must exchange letters with them. Was it "Ephesians" that the Laodiceans had got, or one that is lost?

Philemon

This short letter of "Paul the Aged," as he calls himself in it, to Philemon, one of the members of the Colossian church, is a most touching appeal to Philemon's Christian love and gratitude, on behalf of his runaway slave Onesimus—Paul's own child, "begotten in his bonds." (Does this mean that Onesimus had been picked up by one or other of the deputies and introduced to Paul in prison?) Paul would have liked to keep him, but dared not without his master's consent. Meanwhile, if Onesimus had wronged Philemon, it was to be put to Paul's account.

He would pay. So much love and confidence had Onesimus inspired in the Apostle.

Paul concludes by asking Philemon to prepare him a lodging. He had been there before, and he hoped that, being released at Cæsarea, he would make his projected visit to Rome by way of his churches. The salutation of Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke in this letter shows that all these had taken part in that memorable evangelization of Asia, and that they were known at Colosse.

Philippians.

Perhaps the most intimate of Paul's to a church, this letter is written to acknowledge the receipt of a gift when he was lying in prison at Cæsarea, which had been brought by Epaphras. It is addressed to the saints in Philippi "with the bishops and deacons." He acknowledges their unbroken fellowship in the gospel from the first day (his crossing into Macedonia for the first time) till now. He suffers at the hands of the Romans as he suffered then, as they *now hear*. (Does this mean that Epaphras was carrying the news of his imprisonment with him, or news that it still continues, as they *now hear*?) His imprisonment has led to more abundant preaching of Christ, Jewish Christians vying with Gentile Christians so that there has been progress of the Gospel "throughout the whole prætorium"—the soldiers and slaves

have been reached by means of it—and he rejoices that Christ is preached by whomsoever. He hopes—he *knows*—that he will be spared to see them again. Turning to personal matters, he hopes to send Timothy to them soon. He is sending this by Epaphroditus (Epaphras), who has been sick, having really hazarded his life to bring their gift;¹ and he longs to go to Philippi again. As if drawing to a close, he exhorts Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind; and then he addresses to *Epaphroditus*, his true yokefellow, a sentence (which he will read in their hearing), bidding him “help those women, for they laboured with me in the Gospel,” with Clement also and the rest.

Then he returns to speak of their gift. They had revived their thought of him. He was not in want: he had known how to be abased and how to abound, but they did well to have fellowship with his affliction. It recalled his first coming to Macedonia, how they were the only church that remembered him with a gift, sending once and again to Thessalonica (because they knew that he worked with his own hands for a living). Now he was “full.” All the saints where Paul wrote saluted them, “especially they of Cæsar’s household”—meaning his attendants, and his converts in that imperial institution.

¹ Was Epaphras really a *tenth* “apostle of the Churches,” whose gift was too late to be included in the collection owing to this sickness?

The most important thing in this letter, from the Church historian's point of view, is that it is addressed to the saints at Philippi "*with the bishops and deacons.*" It is the only letter of Paul's in which he singles out the church officers. But this does not mean that such were not common. We believe that every church, fully organized, had both elders (or bishops) and deacons. The term *bishop* may well have come into general use in Paul's Gentile churches, because it emphasised their special duty. The Ephesian elders were addressed from the point of view that they were bishops or overseers. In Paul's only letters to persons charged with the duty of organizing or confirming churches, viz. Timothy and Titus, directions were given as to the selection of both bishops and deacons: and it may therefore be assumed that they were in every church. In Rom. xvi. 1, Phœbe is referred to as a deaconess of the church of Cenchreæ.

How did Paul further employ his time at Cæsarea? He was free to have his friends about him, and we have supposed that after a brief delay five of the delegates left to inform the churches, and four remained—Luke, Timothy, Tychicus and Aristarchus. The Imprisonment Letters would be written at an early stage; but by that time Mark, Demas, and Jesus Justus had joined this small band, being of their number when these letters were written. Mark was there, a

pledge of the sympathy among Jerusalem Christians of the Apostolic circle. We shall revert presently to Mark and the plans that he and Paul seem to have concerted. During the long months other friends would find their way to assure the Apostle of their sympathy and respect. We cannot be wrong in supposing that Philip and his prophetess-daughters ministered to him. But there were other old and well-trying friends, Jewish Christians, who being within reach of Cæsarea would not miss the opportunity when they learned that access to him was easy. Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Jude—yes, and Peter too, and James, and any other of the Apostles who might be at Jerusalem during those two years. None of these is mentioned in Acts; and only those that were with Paul at the time of writing the Imprisonment Letters, and who at the same time were known personally or by rumour to his correspondents, are mentioned in Epistles. Nevertheless we can judge from those he had kept with him and those that had joined the circle at the time of letter-writing what character of men Paul would speak of as “being a comfort” to him. Further, we know by this time the character of Paul himself. He would not waste time even in prison. Timothy, for instance, he would have liked to send to the Philippians when Epaphras went, but Paul needed him too much at the moment (as also all those others). Why did he need him so very much?

This reference leads us to a conclusion which we cannot but have come to without it, namely, that they were all busily employed; and at what but the copying of "Scriptures"—his own and others necessary to the many churches that he had founded in the thirty years of his ministry—hundreds of them now? Until the work he longed to see accomplished *was* accomplished, he could not let them out of his sight. One could not exaggerate the importance of supplying the churches with Scriptures suitable to their need. He had started the idea of supplying general needs by preparing "Romans." Now many copies of it, and of Ephesians for Asiatic churches as well, would be made. Also his letters to the Thessalonians, the Corinthians and the Galatians were of great use in many churches, not to say all. Moreover his churches were for the most part separate from the synagogues, and copies of the Old Testament Scriptures must be provided—although these might be got from Jerusalem. Herein at least was the statesmanship of Paul likely to be called forth in the leisure permitted to him in Cæsarea. Perhaps it is not too much to say that it was because of his imprisonment, both here and at Rome, where he gave Scriptures to his churches in such profusion, that not even the thoroughness of persecution could overtake and destroy them all. The missionary, whose mouth was shut, opened it the more

resolutely by organizing a very effective school of Christian scribes.

In trying to conceive the history of the Christian church universal at the time of Paul's arrest we get the least possible help from Acts. The writer is absorbed in Paul's experiences, and his absorption is studied. He knows very well that the reader will marvel at the extraordinary conduct of Christian Jerusalem in these days; but he avoids the subject by keeping up interest in what happens to Paul, till Jerusalem is left behind. Only one statement is given by way of explaining the action of the Jews who were Christians. James had said that it was believed that Paul had been Gentilizing Jews and that "*the sect of Christian Pharisees,*" who numbered *myriads* in the city, were very angry. There was thus a very large Christian following in Jerusalem. Had they become divided—a sect within the Nazarene sect—since the Circumcision controversy had begun? Had *the many* been won over to the strict Judaistic party so that the Apostolic circle and their followers, who showed a growing sympathy with Paul's views, were actually for the time at least outnumbered? James indicated that they were numerous enough to need conciliating: and, when the crisis came, the Apostolic circle could do nothing openly to assist Paul. So must Theophilus have understood. But as to the upshot of

this division we are altogether without guidance, except for the letters of Peter and "Hebrews," to which we shall make brief reference later. Any such division must have been confined to Judæa; for, though it would spread to the synagogues of the Dispersion, only a small number of "Grecians" would adhere to this sect of "the Pharisees who believed." It was passionate devotion to the Jerusalem tradition in worship and ritual that explained the action of Paul's persecutors, and with this the "Grecians" had little sympathy.

SECTION VIII B

(*Contemporary with Acts xxiv. 24—xxviii. 31
and writing of Acts*)

PAUL'S APPEAL AND ITS RESULT

The remaining portion of Acts deals with Paul's history from the examination before Felix (for it was not a trial) to the end of his imprisonment at Rome.

Felix, called to Rome to give an account of his stewardship in view of Jewish charges against him as Governor, "left Paul bound," having held him prisoner from about May

A.D. 57 for "two years." He had had dealings with Paul, hoping in vain for a bribe. He on one occasion had gratified his wife Drusilla, a Jewish princess, by making Paul explain his faith in Christ, and had been startled by his reasoning on "righteousness, temperance and judgment to come." But now in A.D. 59 he left Paul a prisoner uncondemned, to please the Jews who were now accusing himself at Rome. He was succeeded by Porcius Festus, who wished to please the Jews on beginning his rule as much as did Felix on ending his. Festus had no sooner taken up his residence at Cæsarea than he went to Jerusalem to make the acquaintance of the ruling classes there—the chief priests and their supporters. These Jewish rulers, thinking a new governor would be more easily persuaded, asked as a favour that Paul might be brought to Jerusalem to be tried, since he was a Jew subject to their law. The intention (xxv. 3) was to murder him on the way; for he had been so carefully confined within the palace these two years that no assassin could reach him. This was another attempt of assassination. They knew that they had no case at law. Festus did not grant their request, but said that, as he was in a few days returning to Cæsarea, they should send some of their more influential men to accuse Paul in the Roman court there.

Accordingly, after some days, Festus re-

turned to Cæsarea, and the day after his arrival had Paul brought before his judgment-seat. Accusing Jews stood round the Apostle, "making many grievous charges," which however they could not substantiate—xxv. 7, 8—that Paul had violated Jewish law, had defiled their Temple, and had been guilty of treason against Cæsar (or the Roman State). To these charges Paul pleaded "not guilty." Festus, to win favour with these Jewish aristocrats, proposed to Paul that he might as a Jew go to Jerusalem and submit to trial at Jewish law, he himself not understanding questions affecting it.

In reply, Paul at once claimed to be tried not as a Jew but as a Roman citizen. He stood, he said, at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where he ought to be judged; he had done the Jews no harm, as Festus very well knew; if he had done anything which in Roman law was criminal, he was prepared to die for it, like a Roman; but if he was not guilty, no man (not even a governor) dare give his life to the Jews as a favour (R.V. marg.). "I APPEAL TO CÆSAR!" said he; for he was not minded to spend another term of years in bonds for a governor's convenience. A Roman citizen had the right to appeal to Cæsar, that is, to the highest court of the Empire—the Emperor himself. Festus now conferred with the legal advisers in his court; and their opinion was that the appeal should be allowed. He therefore announced to Paul

his decision : " Thou hast appealed to Cæsar. Unto Cæsar shalt thou go." Once an appeal was allowed, a provincial governor was able to go no further in the case, except to see that the prisoner was safely delivered at Rome. Paul was therefore led back to the Palace prison ; and the great men from Jerusalem went home disappointed of their prey.

The reason for consulting his advisers was because an appeal might be made merely to gain time or escape immediate punishment ; or it might be made by a man of so little consequence that it would be insulting the Imperial High Court to send him thither. Since Paul's appeal was allowed, we learn, on the one hand, that it was deemed to involve an important question needing to be settled by the highest authority—namely, the right of the Gentile Christian religion to be practised in the Roman Empire ; and, on the other hand, that Paul himself was considered a man of sufficient social position and financial resources to be granted the privilege of appealing.

Paul's appeal also meant a final break with the Jewish nation. He was to be no longer a Jew but a Roman. He meant to appear " before Cæsar " as representative of Gentile Christianity, pleading for it the right of toleration in the Roman world. That he must have been contemplating this step when he found that his detention was to be measured not by months, but by years,

seems beyond doubt. The Book of Acts was written with a view to it. But the step itself would be regarded by Jews, even Christian Jews, as national apostasy. The Lord's call to bear witness at Rome seemed obeyable in no other way. It had to be done.

What is hereafter recorded in Acts is (1) a very full account of Paul before Agrippa, concerning which all that is needful to say here is that Agrippa, who was a favourite of the Emperor and whose opinion would have weight, declared that in his judgment Paul was innocent of the crimes charged against him; (2) an account of his voyage to Rome and shipwreck on the way, such an account as is deemed the finest record of a voyage in classical literature, showing what the writer could do when he had leisure, and is put down here with a view to show the character of the man appealing to Cæsar; (3) a brief account of the arrival in Rome and Paul's conference with the leaders of the Jewish synagogue, a conference in Paul's hired house, for he was still a prisoner, though treated with the utmost respect. In all Paul's beginnings in a new city he has been described as first "entering into" the synagogue; but in Rome he had to introduce his Gospel by inviting the synagogue to come to him.

Some reference to his arrival in Rome is necessary. The story in Acts implies that practically all "the brethren" in Rome came

to meet the Apostle as he approached the city. It is not improbable that since the days of Pentecost there were Christian *Jews* in Rome; and they might now be many. But all these would not have come to meet Paul, any more than would all the "believing" Jews of Jerusalem. The brethren referred to *must* have been those into whose hands "The Epistle to the Romans" came—the *members of the Gentile Christian Church in Rome* (Jews and Gentiles). It needed one like the Apostle of the Gentiles himself to bring many believing Jews in the synagogues to the point of having fellowship with believing Gentiles.

The story in Acts does *not* imply that there was in Rome, when Paul arrived, a large church of the Gentiles—like any of the churches of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, or Asia. But Paul made it his business, prisoner though he was, to found and foster such a church. There was indeed a nucleus—"the brethren" who welcomed him on the road; and these would be mainly of the merchant class, whose business required their residence sometimes in provincial cities (where they became members of the churches of the Gentiles), and sometimes in Rome (where they laid the foundations of another such church by fellowship).

It is important also to note Paul's own view of why he had appealed, as he explained to the Jews on his arrival. It was not against

a judgment of any Roman court, or against his own nation, the Jews, for ill-treating him, but against the claim of the Jewish rulers to try him on account of his views about "the hope of Israel." His appeal was for the right to proclaim that hope to the world, both to Jew and to Gentile.

After an all-day conference with them, at which he expounded Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus, he found some believing, others disbelieving. This was his usual synagogue experience. At the close he assured the unbelievers that "this salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles." "They will also hear," he added. Thus did Paul "turn to the Gentiles" in Rome and entered on a work which lasted the "two years"; and has lasted ever since. Luke, Titus and Aristarchus were with him at the beginning, and it may be yielded without dispute that one or other or all of them would set about "confirming" the church there, a church of Jew and Gentile Christians. He spent the two years in public seclusion, but in private semi-freedom; and, as no one ever came from Jerusalem to accuse him, he was by Roman law acquitted, for an appealing prisoner against whom no accuser appeared within eighteen months was acquitted. The last two verses of Acts announce the fact.

If he still stayed in his own hired house, he ceased to be chained to a soldier: and then began such a vigorous preaching of the Word

and exhorting of the brethren as marked Paul's activities everywhere. Though nothing is told us in Acts, and we are quite without explicit information, we can hardly doubt that Paul was pretty sure the end of his trial would be as it turned out, and that he had already gathered old fellow-workers on the spot, ready to co-operate with him in his labours "unto the Kingdom."

What became of Acts and Luke's Gospel, both of which were probably written in Latin as well as in Greek, for Theophilus' use? The Greek copies at least would be made by Luke and his companions. His companions would copy exactly; but Luke might easily have almost unconsciously substituted a word or phrase for another in his own work. This would account for the fact, familiar to scholars, that various equally good readings are found here and there. We do not pretend to judge of this.

But at all events Acts and Luke's Gospel took fast root in Rome. Theophilus himself may be trusted to have put several copies into the hands of men capable of understanding and responding to their appeal. But Paul's attendants, in the enforced leisure of Cæsarea and Rome, had (we believe) copied over and over all Paul's letters and the Gospels and other Scriptures. They still kept copies of them all. So that the church at Rome may be held to have been better equipped with Christian Scriptures than any

other at that time. If our surmise as to what Paul and his many friends were doing in Cæsarea is right, we owe it to Paul's imprisonment that many of them were in circulation, and especially that practically all of them came into effective use in Rome. (The private letters to Timothy and Titus would not be so profusely circulated, but would be sent to trusted men in Asia and Crete for their guidance; and Titus would have in Rome a copy of 1 Timothy, as well as the original copy of "Titus.") In view of all the circumstances the church in Rome may be said to have had a better chance than any other, at this time at least, of becoming familiar with all the Apostle's letters up to date.

The history contained in both Acts and the Pauline epistles ceases here so completely that we are left guessing. Before, however, quitting the period covered by Acts, let us hark back to what took place when Paul was imprisoned at Cæsarea. Mark was one of three Jewish Christians that were a great comfort to him there, as he tells the Colossians (iv. 10); and in mentioning him Paul says, "*Mark, the cousin of Barnabas* (evidently Barnabas was known to the Colossians and had been one of the helpers in the great work in Asia less than two years before) *touching whom* (namely Mark) *ye received commandment; if he come unto you, receive him.*"

What is suggested by this? The Apostle

had some hope that Mark would go to Asia, and had given "commandments" in view of his coming. But they had been conditional—"if." Now why did Mark go to Paul the prisoner at all, when so many professing Christians in Jerusalem were so much against him? And what did he then say to Paul about his imprisonment? Surely that the Apostolic following in Jerusalem were grieved exceedingly by what had happened. They could no more effect a rescue in the circumstances than when Stephen had been killed. For them to have interposed in the heated atmosphere of Jerusalem would have done more harm to the Cause than good. But he himself had found his way thither and assured Paul of their devotion to him and to the Cause. They had all rejoiced in the report of his ministry among the Gentiles, and Peter and the rest were resolved to carry on his work. They had recognized him as an Apostle to the Gentiles when he was at work abroad, and he had recognized them as Apostles to the Circumcision while they stayed in the Holy City. But Peter would do as he had done in Philip's case after the persecution about Stephen, when with John he braved the censure of the Jerusalem church by going to Samaria and supporting Philip's work; or as he did in Cæsarea in connection with Cornelius and his friends. He would go and be Apostle to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews; for he was ashamed of the attitude of

the extreme men in Jerusalem, Christian Pharisees who had shown so little of the spirit of Christ.

There is nothing improbable in this. Paul would be comforted indeed: and he would explain that he had all his churches well organised and was to use his enforced leisure in writing Scriptures for distribution to them. None of his churches but the last evangelized, the Churches of Asia, were in danger. "Jews from Asia" had been the leading spirits in the attack upon him when he was arrested, and they would return to Asia and work their worst there. It would be a fine thing if his brother Peter and others of them could visit Asia and counteract their influence. Peter's presence on such a mission would check the evil. And so (why should it be deemed unlikely, though Acts, as usual, does not refer to it?) Mark talked the matter over often while he took part in the strenuous work of making copies of the serviceable Scriptures, meanwhile no doubt communicating with Jerusalem. Therefore would Paul send "commandments" to Asia, as he sends them to the Colossians (Col. iv. 10). These would be expressed by word of mouth, not in the letter which thus refers to Mark's coming: "If he come, receive him."

We further suggest that this visit to Asia became a wide mission before it was ended, for the Epistles of Peter indicate that such a mission did take place. These letters were

written years after, when persecution had become acute, but they refer to a missionary journey in which Peter, Silas and Mark at least had taken part before then. 1 Peter is addressed to "the elect sojourners in the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia." Asia and South Galatia had been evangelized by Paul and his companions; but in North Galatia and the other provinces we have no evidence and no reason to think that Paul had personally conducted a mission. There seems no room in Acts before his imprisonment for such a work, although the Gentile gospel must have reached them in process of time from Asia and South Galatia. Certainly his profusely provided Scriptures did; for 2 Peter refers to copies of them: "Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, *wrote unto you* [Rom. ii. 4; iii. 25; ix. 22]; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. iii. 15, 16). Now Mark was with Peter when 1 Peter was written; and 2 Peter here refers to the contents of Paul's letters. Whether both letters were written to the same persons or not, the conditions are discernible. The letter of Paul referred to here as having been *written to their readers direct*

would be framed thus (supposing the *Asians* to be reading it):—(1) Opening sentence, “to the Church in Asia, &c.”; (2) the great body of the epistle, word for word the same as Rom. i. 18 to xv. 13; (3) conclusion, exactly as preserved in Rom. xvi. 1–16 (p. 235 ff). For the reference is to “Romans.” The churches in Bithynia, Pontus, Cappadocia, and Galatia would each have the same letter addressed to themselves, suitably adjusted. But besides this general one, other Pauline epistles are referred to—“in *all* his epistles.” Peter was thus writing to readers familiar with all Paul’s letters, not long after the tour of these churches. Is this possible? Indeed, it is highly probable; for copies of Scriptures that were precious to Christians Mark would have made it his business to carry with him from the palace-prison at Cæsarea, and he multiplied them as he went. In any case letters had been received *as from Paul*, and 1 Peter clearly indicates that *Peter, Silas and Mark went on a tour of these provinces*. Probably this was at the time Paul was a prisoner in Rome; for the mission began with Asia, where the work of Paul had not been sufficiently consolidated to resist the attacks of those hostile “Jews from Asia.”

These letters, 1 Peter especially, make it clear that they were addressed to Gentiles as well as Jews in synagogues. There occurs this saying in it: “If ye call on Him as Father who without respect of persons judgeth

according to each man's work," etc. (i. 17), and we are reminded of a similar expression of Peter's in his first recorded sermon to Gentiles (Acts x. 34) : " Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons," etc., given as a reason for treating Cornelius as one would a Jew. In 1 Peter ii. 10 and iv. 3, Gentiles obviously are addressed, where they are spoken of as " in time past no people, but now the people of God," and as people of whom it was true that " the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles." He calls them also to " behaviour seemly among the Gentiles," that is, the unbelieving Gentiles (ii. 12). In short, both letters are addressed to a mixed audience of Jews and Gentiles, all of them Christians. But for these passing references they might have been spoken in Jerusalem, as far as their spirit is concerned. We said somewhere above that in Acts there was no evidence that Peter preached again to Gentiles after the Cornelius incident. Here is evidence from epistles that he had ample opportunity of doing so, and that he imitated Paul's method of confirming the Churches by letter.

CHAPTER VIII

(Contemporary with Hebrews, and 2 Timothy)

THE LAST FIVE OR SIX YEARS OF PAUL

PAUL would give the first-fruits of his release to the Church in Rome. But for how long we cannot say. Judging from his past we cannot think that he would stay for only a brief period in the most important centre of the world's life in those days. We have no history; for the Acts was closed, and all his own letters, except 2 Timothy, were written before his release.

The absence of Pauline letters of this period has suggested to many that Paul never made any further missionary effort, or that he perished at the close of the Acts history; but 2 Timothy forbids such a conclusion; for the whole letter is intelligible only if it was written by Paul's own hand at a later time and in a very different set of circumstances, as we shall see when we come to it. Meanwhile this absence of letters dating from A.D. 61 to 66, a period of (say) six years, deserves some attention. In our judgment there occurred

nothing in any of his churches which required a letter such as his scribe-companions would think it necessary to preserve. They had been reproducing his previous epistles so plentifully that hardly anything arising in his churches would not be met sufficiently by them. Moreover, we reflect that all his letters to his churches were written because he could not make a visit personally at the time. Galatians was written because he needed to be with the churches of Galatia in person without delay, but was prevented by his going up to Jerusalem on the Circumcision question. 1 and 2 Thessalonians were written because he longed to visit the churches of Macedonia "but Satan hindered him," that is, he could not yet return without bringing trouble to Jason and his co-sureties in Thessalonica. (The hindrance would be removed after Gallio's decision.) 1 and 2 Corinthians were written, the one when the Ephesian work prevented his going at once and the other because he was about to retrace his steps to Asia to finish the work there, after his satisfactory meeting with Titus in Macedonia. *The four Imprisonment Letters* were of course written when he was a prisoner. And as to the other two letters, 1 Timothy and Titus, they were private and pressing. The fact that there are none preserved of the period after his release in Rome, merely shows that nothing had occurred in his churches for which he had not already provided in past letters—

Romans of course being a general epistle now widely scattered. There was but one letter of Paul's, yet to be written, that his penmen deemed it necessary to preserve. That was 2 Timothy. Not that Paul did not send many communications in the meantime, but none of them was of general interest to the Church.

That the Apostle went to Spain before returning to his churches in the East has the support of very good evidence, to wit, that he had purposed and promised to do so, and his release would seem to him an invitation to carry out his intention; that for three hundred years no Christian writer is known to have doubted the fact; that, on the contrary, they *say* he did, *e. g.* Clement of Rome, who wrote to the Corinthians in the life-time of men that had heard Paul preach; and that there is no reason to suppose that he would hurry back to his churches in the East as soon as he got his freedom, for they all knew that he was as safe as if he had never been prisoner in Rome. There was ample time for Paul first to confirm the churches in Rome and any of the adjacent cities of Italy where synagogues opened the way; then proceed with some well-known Roman Christians to Spain and evangelize synagogues there; and finally return to Rome and proceed to the East on a revisitation of his churches. It is quite possible for him to have done all this before the year 64 A.D.

In that year began a persecution of Christians throughout the Roman world—of all Christians, of Peter's following and of Paul's. A great fire broke out in Rome, and it pleased the Emperor Nero to blame Christians for it. Why, we do not know. Perhaps his own wicked life was rebuked by theirs; perhaps he was jealous of the new faith as subversive of the popular worship of the Emperor; perhaps he was led by Sadducean Jews, who were always pulling political strings, to observe that the spirit of "the sect of the Pharisees who believed" was dangerous to his authority throughout the Empire—we cannot tell. We do believe, however, that it was not any action or attitude of Paul's Gentile Christians that invited the Emperor's attention. For some political reason, and probably to hide the true incendiaries, the Emperor had blamed *Christians*. The Imperial Edict went forth against the class and would take effect throughout the Empire. Everywhere they had to conceal themselves or flee or perish. Meanwhile Paul was busy visiting the churches: and he had a great deal of ground to cover in doing so.

This persecution is reflected in the letters of Peter already referred to. When it reached the provinces south of the Black Sea, Peter, Silas and Mark were at Babylon (for the church there sends greetings in *1* Peter) and Peter sends a letter, written probably by Mark's hand, and sent by Silas. Babylon has been

believed to be cryptic for Rome; because Rome is so styled in the Revelation. But Revelation is of much later date, and there is no reason to think that Peter had not gone on a visit to churches of the Dispersion in the far East, even as Paul to the far West—no reason except that we have no other authority. But that is no reason. Peter had now been travelling, like Paul himself, far distances to commend Jesus as the Christ.

Hebrews

But the persecution is reflected even better by the Epistle to the Hebrews, an epistle skilfully put together and inspired, yet anonymous. If it were necessary to find the author among Paul's companions (but it is not necessary), we should not be able to get past Apollos, as the likeliest of them all. Against him there is nothing to be remarked as incompatible with his being the author, while against all others there are things incongruous, more or fewer. In his favour is one very remarkable fact,—that he enjoys a distinction in the book of Acts that none else has. In that book, when any special reference is made to an individual which we do not find easily explained in a statement meant for Paul's trial, it is because this individual is to appear later in the story. But not so Apollos: he is introduced in the story in such a way that we expect to hear more of him in the book. Yet we hear nothing more.

What then is said of him? That he was a man of Alexandria, "mighty in the Scriptures"; and that in Corinth "he helped them much which had believed through grace; for he powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." Why does Luke in the Acts go out of his way to make such a reference? Had he a Gospel-writer's special interest in Apollos as a writer as he had in Mark? And did he know that when Apollos and Zenas the lawyer were passing Crete (Titus iii. 13), they were going on a mission at Paul's instance to Jewish Christians, "the sect of the Pharisees who believed," Christians in name but lacking in Christ's spirit, impenitent Judaizers? For that numerous class of Christians, both in Jerusalem and in the synagogues of the Dispersion, were not only a thorn in the sides of the Apostles of the Circumcision but a menace to the Church of Christ universal; and Paul had seen the trouble they would yet cause if they should persist in magnifying the observance of the Law, in worship and in fellowship, while they still professed their faith in Jesus as the Christ. Apollos had been sent, it is not too much to think, to do in other places as he had done in Corinth, and doubtless also in Ephesus. And Luke in the Acts could not pass this man by even in his so limited a history. Be this as it may, Apollos had the necessary equipment to put in writing arguments for those that

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sincerely believed it wrong to give up the hoary practice of Israelite worship even for Christ's sake. The arguments so put in writing would be added to when the persecution became general, and the *completed* letter to these Hebrew Christians, the final form, would be the letter we now call *Hebrews*.

We note that in the sixth chapter of *Hebrews* the writer (to clear the ground for his main argument) says that he will take for granted that his readers are familiar with the first principles of Christ, with repentance from dead works, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. He grants, as it were, that they are sound enough on these. But he proceeds to show in the next five chapters that there is no more need of the old ritual—of High-priest or priests offering sacrifices, of Tabernacles, covenants, or sacrifice of bulls and goats, but that Christ or Christ's work makes them all obsolete—that having Christ these are no longer necessary. Then he speaks of faith, what it did in the past and can better do now, and bids his readers be encouraged to faith by many examples—examples in Old Testament history. But he passes from the crossing of the Red Sea to the fall of Jericho, omitting all reference to the giving of the Law (xi. 29–30), as if emphasizing that the Law had nothing to do with faith. He bids them keep their eye on Jesus, and follow peace and “the Sanctification without which no man shall

see the Lord." Then in the final chapter he appeals to all that is best in them to let love continue (for that had been conspicuously absent), and to remember all that are in bonds (the persecution had reached them), and them that rule over them. He warns them against being led away by strange teaching, as *e. g.* about meats. It was the old way for sacrificed animals to be burned without the camp. Jesus is our Sacrifice; "Let us therefore go forth with Jesus without the camp."

Verily Hebrews was written by one "mighty in the Scriptures," able to win over many "Pharisees who believed" but who still clung to Jewish ritual. A copy of it was addressed by one that knew Timothy; for, as a postscript, he adds (to some Church where there were many Jews), "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty." He also has members of some church in Italy with him, for he says "they of Italy salute you." And he says that with Timothy, if he comes soon, he will see them. The sender of this copy of "Hebrews" is not necessarily the author. If the sender was Paul, then this copy would be sent to some of the churches that he was expecting to visit in the course of his general visitation when the Neronian persecution had taken effect. He would have deputies from Italy travelling with him. But in this case we must regard Timothy as having been arrested in the general persecution, and Paul as having been able to effect his release. Paul

is a Roman citizen and the Roman magistrates have not yet laid hands on him, though they have ventured to seize one so precious to him as Timothy.

Before we consider 2 Timothy, let us pause to say that neither in *James*, *Jude*, *the three Johns*, nor in *Revelation* do we find anything that would lead us to say that they were written in Paul's time or later. But of James and Jude we have no doubt that they were written long before this. Revelation does throw light on "the Seven Churches of Asia," but at a much later time than Paul's. Of Matthew's Gospel and John's we have said nothing, because of the time of writing we have no evidence. Matthew's Gospel, however, is based on Mark's and may well have been in use in the Churches of the Dispersion for many years. We have found reason to believe that Mark's Gospel was known as early at least as A.D. 46 if not before, and every year had added to its dissemination. The Christians in far-scattered synagogues would never rest till they had the story of Christ's life and words in one form or another. Now that a generation had passed since the Resurrection, the words of life had winged their way to every known land. Gentiles as well as Jews were won to the Faith everywhere, though not in every synagogue would they be received until they first became members of the Jewish Church. Nevertheless, in many places, in all lands, they were

evangelized just as in Antioch, Cyrene, and Cyprus at the first.

Our effort to employ all references in these New Testament Scriptures of the early Church so as to present a consistent course of Church history, in which each fact (taken at its face value) may be respected, is now all but ended. The last scripture to engage our attention is 2 Timothy. Its evidence is simple and direct, both as to time of writing, and as to its message.

2 Timothy.

It cannot have been written either before or during Paul's first imprisonment. The date at which the Roman senate had altered the name of their province "Illyricum" to "Dalmatia" is known from Suetonius to have been some time in the sixties. Now Paul, in writing Romans xv. 19 in A.D. 57 called it Illyricum; but in writing 2 Tim. iv. 10 he called it "Dalmatia." The change of name had taken place; and he was writing at some time well into the sixties. Moreover he wrote as one "in bonds as a malefactor" (ii. 9), showing that he did not write during that first imprisonment, for in it he was treated with "indulgence" (Acts xxiv. 23). Also at the time of writing he has very recently had certain experiences in Asia, showing that he had got so far in re-visiting his churches (i. 15, etc.). One must give these three facts

their due combined weight. Having adjusted one's mind to the situation and allowed the letter to speak throughout for itself, one finds historical references unusually abundant here which call up a very definite picture of this last occurrence in the life of Paul of which we have any historical evidence. The tide of Nero's persecution has already swept over Asia. Paul's Roman citizenship, already well-established, acts as a shield at first; but only for a time. He is taken prisoner, is *tried* before the proconsular court (not examined as before Felix, but tried) and condemned. He appeals to Cæsar and has influence enough to have the appeal allowed. This is no idle imagination; from the past learn the present. He is now in Rome as a prisoner, or *on the way to Rome*: one must judge from the internal evidence. Let us review the letter and see if it does not bear out these suggestions.

The letter is addressed to "Timothy, my beloved child," and speaks as one "remembering thy tears" (was he thinking of their last parting?), but also recalling Timothy's past life of service in the cause "for which I also suffer these things." Then he proceeds: "Thou knowest this, that there turned away from me all in Asia of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes" (i. 15).¹ All the class to which these two belong deserted him in that

¹ This would appear to be the correct translation.

hour—all his Asiarch friends whose position gave them influence, and who had stood by him during the Uproar some eight or nine years ago. So that in their absence when he stood before the proconsular court to answer for himself, none stood by him (iv. 16).

He cannot help naming Phygellus and Her-mogenes as friends whose support he might have expected, but who failed him, and calculating how different it had been with Onesiphorus when he was in Rome (during the first imprisonment); for he had sought Paul out and oft refreshed him, being nowise ashamed of his chain (i. 16-18). Now, as he writes, Paul is again in bonds, but this time "as a malefactor." He gets no kindness as he did before. Where then is Paul writing from? Though Timothy knows what happened at Ephesus, he does not know what has become of Paul's fellow-workers; *therefore little time has elapsed since these things happened*. Thus if the letter is from Rome it was written immediately on Paul's arrival; but it may have been written from some State prison on the way to Rome. For to Rome Paul was sent. Tradition is clear that his martyrdom took place there, and we know enough to be sure he would appeal to Cæsar against a proconsular judgment condemning him to death. Though no man stood by him at "his first defence," he was "delivered out of the lion's mouth" just when he was about to be crushed in its jaws

(iv. 16, 17)—having, as before Agrippa, delivered the gospel message in presence of all the Gentiles in the court. What, after this, became of his fellow-workers? Timothy will wish to know. Well (iv. 9-13), Demas, given the option of staying with Paul as an attendant, was unwilling to risk his life and had gone to Thessalonica. Crescens was sent to Galatia with the news, Titus to Dalmatia. Trophimus had set out from Ephesus as attendant to Paul, but had to be left at Miletus sick. Erastus stayed at Corinth as they passed through. Luke is the only one of his domestic attendants left ("only Luke is with me"); and Paul now wishes Timothy to come and bring with him that skilful writer Mark, who would be of great service, as at Cæsarea. So, too, Tychicus would have been, but he was being sent to Ephesus, to relieve Timothy. As Timothy will be journeying by Troas, he is requested to bring the cloak left there with Carpus, "and the books, but especially the parchments." For Paul, notwithstanding a foreboding of the end, means to do in Rome as he did before, employ the pen and every available penman in the service of the gospel.

Before closing this letter Paul sends the greetings of "Eubulus, Pudens, Linus and Claudia, and all the brethren." These names do not suggest Rome as the place of writing more than some place on the way to Rome, but tradition credits Linus

with being the first bishop of Rome after the Apostles.

As to the great message of the letter, we note that it counsels Timothy to "keep the deposit" of the faith, to "preach the word," to take oversight of Christ's Church as one that must give in His account, and all this solemn charge is given as if Timothy were to stay on, instead of following Paul to Rome. For Paul does not know that he will ever again see his "son Timothy" in the flesh. Everything is uncertain except the faithfulness of Christ (i. 12); and Paul, as one whose race is run and whose crown is near, passes on his commission to Timothy (iv. 7, 8). The passage iv. 6-8 is *the last recorded "word" of the Apostle Paul*, a beautiful farewell to a strenuous life, thrilling like a trumpet call in every young preacher's breast.

Though tradition in most cases cannot be trusted, the deaths of Paul and of Peter would certainly be faithfully handed down from generation to generation. We have no reason to doubt that Paul suffered death by beheading outside the walls of Rome, on the road to Ostia, its harbour, at a place now called "Tre Fontane," as tradition says. This last letter is the waving of his hand to all his fellow-disciples and fellow-workers as he disappears. Peter, as tradition has it, suffered "the shameful death of the Cross," for he was not a Roman Citizen who should

escape that; suffered crucifixion, too, head downwards, in Rome. This would be in the same persecution, whether before or after Paul's death we cannot tell. Neither can we be sure what happened to the other members of the Twelve who survived to this time, although there may be more truth than we guess in other non-canonical writings of early Christian days.

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